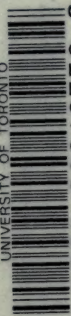


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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# PRODUCING IN LITTLE THEATERS


CLARENCE STRATTON







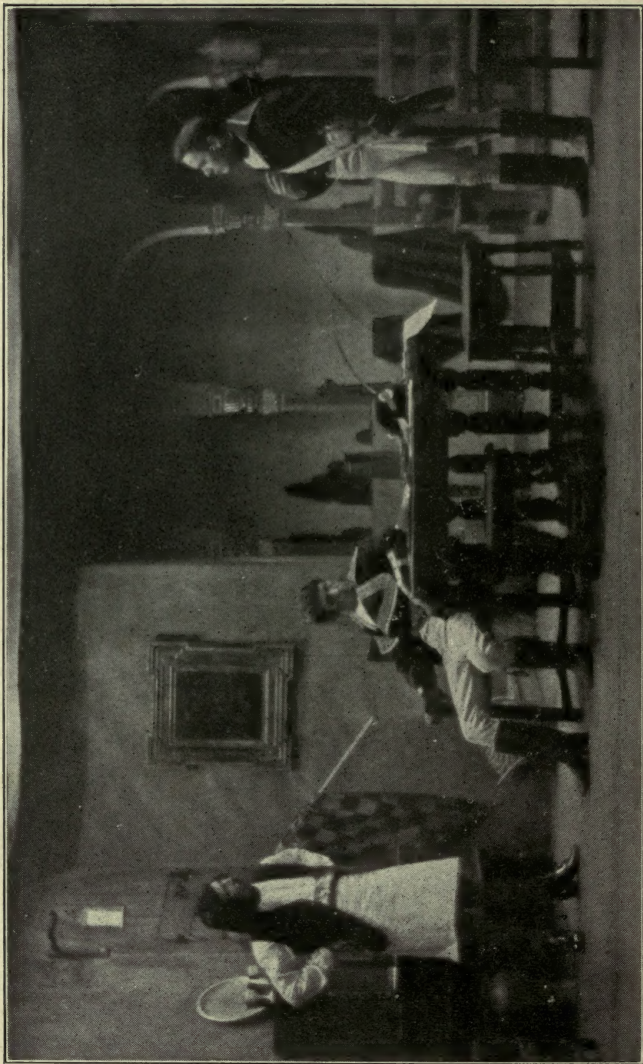




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Photograph by Arthur Kales

THE MAN OF DESTINY, by G. Bernard Shaw. The Community Theater, Hollywood. Designed by James Mitchell Leisen.



# PRODUCING IN LITTLE THEATERS

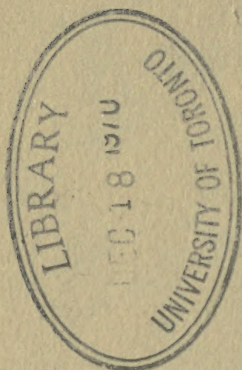
BY  
CLARENCE STRATTON



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*Quella milizia del  
Celeste regno.*

DANTE





## PREFATORY NOTE

In gathering material and illustrations for this volume I have applied to a great many active workers in little theater productions in all parts of the country and have secured information which I hope I have adequately represented in the text, and received hundreds of photographs.

I regret that more of these could not be included as illustrations. I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness and to express my thanks to Miss Alice Gerstenberg; to Miss Neelye Dickson of the Community Theater at Hollywood, California; to Miss Alice Boughton of New York; to Miss Hallie Gelbart of Hartford; to Mrs. Arthur Aldis of Lake Forest, Illinois; to Mr. Samuel A. Eliot, Jr., of Smith College; to Mr. Daniel Quirk of the Ypsilanti, Michigan, Players; to Mr. T. Kajiwara of Saint Louis; to Professor A. M. Drummond of Cornell; to Mr. Charles Rann Kennedy; to Mr. Boyd Martin of the University of Louisville; to Mr. John Steinke of Cleveland; to Mr. Thomas Wood Stevens of Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; to Mr. William Ziegler Nourse of Chicago; to Fakes, Bisbee, and Robertson, interior decorators, of New York; to the Yale Dramatic Association; to Mr. Eugene O'Neill; to the Provincetown Theater; to Mr. C. Raymond Jonson of Chicago; to Mr. Glenn Hughes of the University of Washington; to Mr. Frederick H. Koch of the University of North Carolina; to the Stuyvesant Players of New York; to the College Club of Cleveland; to the Little Theater of Denver.

CLEVELAND, 1921



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# PRODUCING IN LITTLE THEATERS

## CHAPTER I

### GROWING INTEREST IN DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS

THERE is no doubt that during the next few years there will be more participation throughout the United States in amateur dramatics than ever before. Even before the war had drawn its thousands of men and women from regular life there were indications of a wide spreading of dramatic interest. Every elementary and secondary school presented plays. Courses in dramatics and play production were being introduced into nearly every college and university. Even churches were engaging in dramatic activities; some timidly venturing no further than religious drama; others quite frankly providing entertainment by offering plays of many different kinds. It is reported that there are some ten thousand acting groups connected with churches. The community idea of entertainment and recreation was widening to include acting as an attractive pursuit.

The period of seeming inactivity during the war did not block the attempts of enthusiasts; in all likelihood it stimulated the determination to produce plays, for wherever

## 2 PRODUCING IN LITTLE THEATERS

bodies of men were in training or service, entertainments of all kinds were demanded and supplied, often in forms new and fascinating to dwellers of regions where similar performances were unknown. As thousands of these men and women were initiated by force of circumstances into the process of providing dramatic material, as many of them were even drafted as performers, they learned a few rudiments of the attractive art which they have been exercising since they have returned to their former pursuits. Many of them, living in sequestered villages or rural districts where no attempt has ever been made to provide dramatic fare, have enthusiastically set about supplying the lack by producing plays themselves.

In larger centers, likewise, this impulse to produce plays has not died because of absence of opportunity. From one phase of the War Camp Community Service has developed a Committee on Memorials, one of whose laudable efforts is to induce communities to build worthy, living reminders of their heroic dead; to erect attractive buildings in which all noble civic and social interests may be fostered. Nearly every building plan recommended by this committee contains an auditorium with a practicable stage. Every effort of this efficient service is being directed to helping architects and builders to make that stage and that audience space available for all possible uses—including, as not the least, the production of plays. The number of such community centers increases so rapidly that any figures quoted here would be insignificant when compared with actuality. No matter how high the estimate might be placed, while the statement was being read, the exaggeration would end, for



## INTEREST IN DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS 3

the number of completed and projected memorials would have passed that total. Soon almost countless localities in this country will have houses in which good plays can be adequately rehearsed and performed. Then will drama, now restricted to so few cities and towns because of long runs, increased railroad charges, and the growing dislike of the best performers to undergo the discomforts of travel and the uncertainty of reception by inexperienced audiences, spread to nearly every part of the land to entertain, educate, and stimulate people in ways which no other human agencies can ever equal.

Cities with playgrounds, and open-air theaters, workshop and laboratory playhouses, public and private schools with usually badly constructed stages but surprisingly good performances, societies of all sorts, are inducing many-sided participation in dramatics.

From all parts of the United States come reports of serious undertakings. From all parts come requests for lists of plays, addresses of supply houses, methods of rehearsing, designs for settings. One publisher of plays reports that his mail business in the Southwest equals his entire demand of a few years ago. A professional scenery builder sends each year a representative through several states to design stage settings in schools and other buildings contemplated or being erected. Orders for stage equipment in a city of Florida are filled in a shop as far away as Saint Louis. Costumes for a historical drama have been shipped from Philadelphia to a town in Texas.

Linked with such material progress are appeals for methods to follow in organizing and managing amateur dramatic

#### 4        PRODUCING IN LITTLE THEATERS

societies. This indicates a sane procedure, for many a society with every other factor operating for its success has hesitated or failed because of defects in preliminary organization or in regular control. Others begin under the most propitious auspices imaginable, only to meet wreck and ruin from incompetence or impracticableness which is entirely unforeseen at the time of the sanguine but badly managed organization.

The annals of amateur play production are crammed with weird stories of eruptions and disruptions.

## CHAPTER II

### ORGANIZING AN AMATEUR GROUP

ORGANIZED effort does not mean necessarily affiliation with a large movement. Your dramatics may be purely local. Perhaps in most communities this is best. Then the performances will be sources of local pride. The enthusiasm will be spontaneous and concentrated. The lessons learned from defects and merits may be applied to local conditions at once. And above all, such an arrangement should arouse a valuable sense of loyalty. Frequently, movements spread widely over the entire country waste upon "causes" or "ideals" energy which should go into actual dramatic productions. The wrangling about policies, and more powerful still as a bone of contention, the collection of assessments and the disbursement of funds, consume time and attention which is necessarily taken from the stated and supposedly intended purpose of the organization to be busied with play production.

Such large projects as community masques and pageants, municipal operas and plays, patriotic spectacles and celebrations, which because of their magnitude and temporary enthusiasm present phases of organization not likely to confront the average amateur society, will be disregarded here.

A few other declarations of fact will further prepare for the practical details which this section will attempt to offer as help in arranging for dramatics in your own locality.

## 6 PRODUCING IN LITTLE THEATERS

It is not expected that amateur performances will replace the regular professional theater. They will merely supplement it. They will result in increased attendance at professional plays.

Amateur acting societies will never be able to include all the inhabitants of any one locality in a performance. If such an undesirable thing occurred who would remain to constitute the audience? To accomplish such a result, even were it possible, would be the *reductio ad absurdum* of acting. Think, too, of the level of acting in such a dispersion of the mimetic art. Certain groups of people will always want to act. Other larger groups will always want to look on. These two—the active and the passive—merely need to be drawn closely together.

Producing plays always entails a great deal of continuous hard work. This fact is fundamental, though many persons seem to disregard it whenever acting is discussed. Some persons exclaim enthusiastically, "Let's give a play," and then fold their hands complacently, as though they expected the play to produce itself.

Performances cannot be given without expense.

Let us now consider some of the details involved in dramatic ventures.

What shall your organization be called? The name you choose should suggest the nature of your attempt. Therefore you must consider very carefully exactly what you are going to attempt. Have you any special purpose? Can you expect to interest large and fluctuating bodies of individuals in a narrow or propaganda purpose? The name should be modest rather than pretentious, impressive rather





Plays by Eugene O'Neill, Wharf Theater, Provincetown.

Above: *Bound East for Cardiff*.

Below: Rehearsal of *Thirst*. In performance the sky, without a wrinkle, met the water in a perfect horizon.



#### REHEARSALS

Above. Scene shifting, *The Work Shop*, University of Louisville.

Below: *The Pot Boiler*, by Alice Gerstenberg. The corner of a large theater stage.

than high-sounding. What would people expect of a Society for the Improvement of Dramatic Art in America? Its name would pledge it to a program almost impossible of inauguration. What will improve "dramatic art in America"? Could all its members agree upon methods of "improvement"? It would be valuable to examine the programs of an organization laboring under such a name, read printed reviews of its productions, and learn how long it continued to exist. In all things dramatic, failures are as helpful to workers as are successes. The name should connote stage-craft without, however, binding to rigidity an organization needing fluxion and adaptability. It should not antagonize audiences. It should not state purposes which it cannot carry out. If you cannot find some expression to answer to all these requirements you can get along just as well by using your local name and christening the group the Pittsburgh Players, the South Bend Dramatic Club, the Alameda Acting Association.

Do not merely adopt the name of some other club. Certain groups have tried to win patronage by calling themselves Neighborhood Players after one excellent association in New York even though their members are not connected with any Neighborhood House, serve no limited section, and draw from no localized vicinity. Little Theaters might just as well be definitely identified also. Toy Theater Companies suffer slightly from the suggestion of trifling connoted by the name. It would be incongruous to see *Electra* or *Ghosts* or *Justice* or *Dregs* in a toy theater. Exclusive groups should not be labeled Community Theater companies. That word should be reserved for true community



endeavors. Would any one expect a Comedy Club to present tragedies or even such a somber play as *The Girl in the Coffin*? The attractive equipment of the quaintly named Portmanteau Theater lost much of its significance and the value of its name when the paraphernalia was set upon the stage of a large professional theater. Such placement confined to a small space action which could have been with more effect spread over the full stage. It inserted its own restricted hangings where wider sweeps were desirable and available. It was at least unnecessary, even if not entirely inappropriate. "MacDougall's Barn" was a good name so long as plays were performed in a barn or some other crude interior, but the name seemed banal or worthless when the bill was transferred for an evening to the Cohan and Harris Theater in New York.

The well-deserved success of the New York Theater Guild has already induced two other cities to use that fitting appellation. Laboratory theaters may well be limited to the actual classrooms of college courses. Workshop theaters and theater workshops seem to place more emphasis upon experiment than performance, causing a reflex apathy in audiences. Would a group called The New Players dare to produce an old Greek drama, even *Lysistrata*, the theme of which is as modern as the play is old?

Many groups are already happily denominated. This list may suggest some similar expression as suitable for yours. The Mask and Wig Club, Sock and Buskin, Paint and Powder, Triangle Club, Hasty Pudding, Talma Club, Plays and Players, Philistine Players, East-West Players, Little Country Theater, Vagabond Theater, Campus Thea-

ter, Harlequin Players, Studio Players, Caravan Theater, Arts and Crafts, Art Theater, Prairie Players, Junior Players, Temple Players, Independent Theater, Pioneer Players, Thimble Theater, Everyman Theater.

Your choice of name should depend also upon the purpose of your society.

Do not start out with the avowed intention of reforming the American drama. Attempt something you will be likely in some degree to accomplish. If you intend merely to present plays without limiting your efforts to any one kind, and sincerely try to present them well, this is not an insignificant ambition. Better purposes are to provide performances of distinctive dramas not likely to appear upon the professional stage, to develop the acting ability of members, and to respond to a growing demand for the best dramatic literature of all times and languages. Any organization pledged to this last deserves every measure of success, for it will be satisfying a natural, worthy need. Best of all, its audience is now ready and waiting for it.

In actual organization the society may be a small acting group. In such cases the advantages are that the few members secure continuous training in rehearsal and performance. They have many chances to experiment with individualistic interpretations. As the season progresses it is fair to believe that they will advance markedly in stage behavior and characterization. Working together, they will soon develop a sense of artistic coöperation, and if they can stifle in themselves the temperamental desire for personal glorification, they should be able to offer harmonious productions. If the natural disposition to "stardom" can be

neutralized, so that the performer of the lead in one production will be content to sink to a minor rôle in the next, there should result a harmony of acting as well as harmony of temperaments. In such a restricted group of actors there is always the tendency to crystallize into type rôles, making it almost impossible for the director to change conditions. Amateurs know the composition of professional companies, and will try to reproduce that arrangement for themselves.

On the other hand there is another danger, for the audience may become tired of seeing so frequently the same performers in the different casts, no matter how well they act. Professional stock companies produce this same impression of monotony. Many a spectator of every season's bills has sighed inwardly as he glanced at his program, "Oh, they use her in everything!" In one such group a certain woman was allowed to monopolize all the leads. No longer young, she was manifestly unsuited to most of the rôles. Her best experience had been gained in old-fashioned poetic drama, so that in modern situations she was decidedly out of the pictures. Having been accustomed to don costumes of the past, she paid little attention to the essentially feminine art of making a good appearance, and therefore was never able in modern plays to "dress the part." But she was the best memorizer of the group, the most willing, the hardest worker, so she became the most prominent, even though her presence spoiled many a performance. A compromise which will produce the best results from a small group is to have it large enough to allow telling variety in combinations, and then insisting upon the variety.



A large group in which any person may be called upon to participate frequently also has peculiar dangers. If some members are not used often enough to please themselves or their friends, they see no reason for belonging; they lose interest and withdraw. To offset this feeling of non-participation a director must try to include as many members as possible. It is a matter of pride with nearly every such large organization to accomplish this. At the end of a season a company tries to prove its communism of effort by recapitulating the use made of its personnel. Such modest declarations of self-congratulation as the following paraphrased from an annual statement are frequent: "A total of eighty-eight people have assisted with the music, properties, costumes, direction, dancing, programs, advertising, business management, and sale of tickets. Of this number forty-six have not acted in the plays. One hundred eighteen different persons acted. Of this number one appeared five times, two others four times, and twenty-six have appeared twice. Thus a total of one hundred sixty-four contributed to the efforts of this organization in a single year."

If, because of ability or friendship or social prestige, a certain few are cast several times, jealousies and envy and all uncharitableness break out virulently.

A good flexible working arrangement is to have active and associate memberships with the prospect of adding to both, or making transfers, as the need arises. Every society should determine for itself exactly what differences of standing, privilege, voting, dues, tickets, tenure of office, shall distinguish active from passive membership.

When membership is assured the usual officers of any organization should be elected. To these must be added a staff of workers and directors, each a specialist or a student of a peculiar activity. Most important of all will be the producer, the person directly and personally responsible for the working out of the details of any project from the time a play is selected until the curtain descends upon its performance. In some organizations this official is the member best fitted for this work. In this case he may be elected, or appointed to do the work for an entire season. Sometimes he is a professional hired in a business-like manner upon a formal contract, and retained only so long as his services suit his employers. A great many little theater organizations in this country follow this plan. A much more enjoyable plan, though it must be admitted that it produces palpitation of the heart over some appearances, is to have a different producer for each play. In a bill of four one-act plays, four different producers would be represented upon the program. Such a method results in more active participation of more members than others detailed here. It raises the level of the methods by comparison, imitation, and emulation. It develops originality of method. Persons who have produced are frequently by that experience rendered better performers. Many a performer develops into a better producer. It overcomes the lethargy of non-participants, as there is always the keenness of judging a new or different producer's results. Whether these producers be elected by the entire membership or appointed by the governing board, they should be required to carry out their assignments, or pay a fine for release unless a

legitimate reason is offered. Such a plan will result in exhibitions by some dozen producers during a season. The educative value of such variety to the audiences as well as to the individuals themselves is incalculable.

Writers who would pattern every amateur activity upon the model of professional companies always stipulate that a producer or director must have a stage-manager to hold the book during rehearsals, to mark business, to prompt, to make property lists, to see that the stage is set, to give music cues, to ring the curtain up and down, etc. My own observation is that most amateur producers do practically all of these things themselves, or distribute them. The necessity for such a versatile stage-manager exists in professional companies because the producer retires after the performance has been repeated a few times, when the stage-manager replaces him for the odd jobs which must still be overseen.

The stage-manager in amateur arrangements usually fills the slightly higher function of assistant director.

Around the director there should be grouped a productions committee, every member of which should be a specialist in a certain phase of theater art. One should be the scenery designer or adapter. Closely associated with him should be the furniture and decorating expert. Working in closest accord with these should be the costume designer or maker. Another member should collect properties. In all discussions the lighting director should participate with helpful advice or practical objections. Not so deeply implicated yet important at times is the music director. There may even be an amateur make-up artist who wishes to know

the play intimately in order to expedite preliminaries at dress-rehearsal and performance. These active leaders should form the working body of control over every production, themselves as individuals and as a group subject to the officers or executive board of the organization.

Then every one of these leaders should have under him or her a working committee to execute commissions and produce results. The scene designer may design, but have one of his assistants finish the colored drawing to scale. The draping expert may determine color; her assistants may scour the homes of members to find the suitable lampshades. The furniture enthusiast may describe an ornament, but one of her assistants may be the only one who knows how to create it from glue, paper-pulp, and paints. The music director should be given exact requirements, then proceed to fill them. He cannot be allowed to provide anything he pleases as incidental or entr'acte music. While music may be an aid to some plays, it may be entirely out of keeping with others. In this latter case this member of the committee should be courteously instructed that he and his assistants will not be used in this production. I do not believe that the place of the best musician your society has can be adequately filled by a graphophone off-stage. Some musicians are almost adamant against pleas to furnish off-stage music, as for a street song in *Sabotage* or a dance in *The Holiday*, yet their sense of loyalty and cooperation in a worthy enterprise should be aroused for even such humble tasks.

A play-reading committee is frequently a time and labor saving arrangement for executive boards. There will every



season be specifications of certain kinds to be fulfilled. One season may have shown the need of a lighter touch in the plays. The members of the play-reading committee then search for that kind of material. A bill in prospect is too light; it needs a stabilizing item. A search is made for that. Readers should meet frequently and discuss freely. Their written recommendations giving full explanations should be sent to the executive board or to the producer frequently, so that these persons may have leisure in which to examine possible material.

The business or finance committee is almost entirely separate in function from the preceding. Its chairman may have to confer with other chairmen at times, but once the policy is adopted, the play chosen, the producer instructed, the budget estimated, the work of the business committee is entirely distinct from the activity of the productions committee. In theatrical parlance the latter is concerned only with the "back of the house," that portion behind the proscenium; the former committee controls the "front of the house."

The composition and duties of all other committees will take form from the three chief bodies just outlined here—the officers or executive board of the entire organization, the productions committee, the business or finance committee. For instance, a membership committee springs from the executive board. A stage model committee would be an outgrowth of the productions group. A printing or advertising committee would spring from the business organization. Others might be concerned with suppers, guests, lectures, publicity, photographs, library, building fund, nomi-

## 16 PRODUCING IN LITTLE THEATERS

nations, coöperation with other groups, or circuiting performances.

Quite as important as membership is money. No play, I venture to say, however simple, can be produced without at least buying the copies. This is the fundamental first expense. To it many others are added. Play production costs money. Your club may start on nothing a year, and, if you can secure credit, may pay the bills you incur with the proceeds of the first performance, if you are successful in attracting a paying audience. Some organizations charge dues of varying amounts up to say ten dollars annually. In coöperative plans the members advance enough to cover the first performance, and are repaid at the end of the season. A feeling of security and independence alike is afforded by the pledges of guarantors, who should be called upon to redeem their pledges only when all other resources are exhausted. There is one danger in this scheme. An over-enthusiastic director feeling that the guarantors are bound to cover any deficit may plunge heavily and so instead of creating loyalty, may arouse antagonism.

It is more artistic to insure permanency and solvency by being careful about money than to be a fly-by-night producer cleaning up on one splurge. In estimating your total income try to be moderate. Do not count every available seat as sold until it has been paid for. Provide for the deduction of every legitimate expense. If your income is from dues, collect early in the season. Remember that not every person listed as a member will pay dues. Estimate the usual loss by resignation and removal. With a knowledge of your entire resources plan the number of performances

and allot the available funds. With two hundred members at five dollars each you may reasonably count upon nine hundred dollars to spend. If one program is to be made up of modern plays for which costumes can be secured for nothing, or if a play entails no royalty, you will be able to shift money to other undertakings.

On paid admissions always discount anticipated receipts.

One of the most fascinating features of such dramatic work as this chapter is discussing is the realization of remarkable effects upon limited means. Perhaps the best aspect of the non-commercial theater is this willingness and skill in securing remarkable results with economical and inadequate resources.

The one item which will have the most direct bearing upon your expense sheet will be the equipment of the stage you use. Whenever you rent be sure to know exactly what the terms include. Ask especially about extra time. Learn whether the dress rehearsal will require a union stage crew. Be clearly informed upon the relation between union stage hands and union musicians. Look carefully over the house scenery, furniture, and properties to determine how much you can use. Know exactly how much of the material available you will want to use. The general rule is that the rental of a hall with stage, or of a theater, includes all the standing scenery and any that may be hanging. In many instances it turns out that other amateur organizations have left their material in the custody of the theater, and it may happen that unless you take special care in finding out such things, you may be prevented from using what you contemplated. At the last crowded minute you may have to

secure the consent of several people to utilize the black curtains or the old gold screens you had counted on for your best effects. Yet with all allowances made, the amount of valuable assistance which amateur directors are able to enlist is amazing. Nearly every one is generous when amateur productions are impending. Owners of professional theaters and members of stage crews are more frequently extremely accommodating than the reverse. But it is wise not to depend too much on last minute round-ups. In all affairs dramatic, preparation is always better than regret.

In planning for your finances prepare a budget, even though you know at the time that the final bills will go higher. They always do. In financial phases of organization and control nothing makes advice so impressive as do figures. A few excerpts from expense accounts of societies in various sections of the country, with an analysis of some of the items, will make concrete the general recommendations already given. These tabulations will also indicate how different bodies of actors emphasize different aspects of productions.

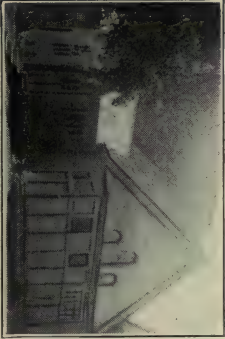
The subjoined list attempts to include all the possibilities which may be present under varying circumstances. If you are able to eliminate many of these you are peculiarly fortunate.

**POSTAGE.** This varies greatly with the nature of the organization and the performances.

**PRINTING.** In your stationery make modest claims. Let it make a good impression. Don't promise too much. Advertising may come under this heading.

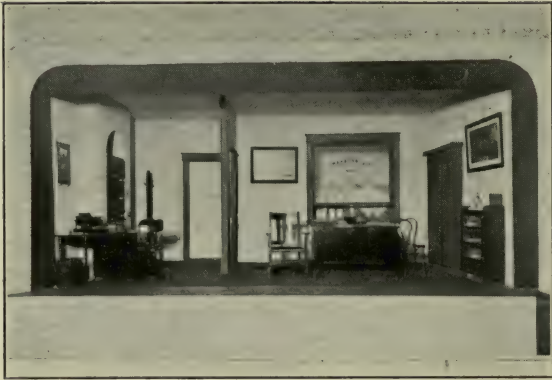
**RENTAL.** This is usually the largest item. Reductions





Players' Playhouse, Ypsilanti  
          
The Playhouse, Cleveland

New York State Fair, Syracuse  
          
Little Theater, Los Angeles



DRAMATIC WORK SHOP, University of Louisville  
Parts of the same scenery arranged in two different  
sets.

Above: *The Package from Lexington*, by George Ade.

Below: *Green Stockings*, by A. E. W. Mason.

can be secured by contracting for a number of performances. Possibly you can have rehearsals at odd times when the stage is not engaged. Professional houses are more likely to grant you this privilege than private halls. The rental for a dress rehearsal is always less than for a performance. If you are obliged to engage union stage hands and musicians you may sometimes save money by having the dress rehearsal the afternoon of the same day as the performance. Of course this complicates other matters, but it does save money.

ROYALTIES, AND COPIES OF THE PLAYS. Copies of a single play for a cast may cost as much as ten or fifteen dollars, either in typoscript or book form. Scores of the best plays are either out of print or buried in issues of little known and locally circulated periodicals. It is next to impossible to secure copies of some plays. If you doubt this, ask your book dealer to supply you with ten copies for your cast of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. I doubt if he will be able to supply you with four copies of any one good translation. Always pay royalties for modern plays, unless authors *offer* them for nothing. You would not ask a stationer to give you envelopes, nor a grocer tea for an English comedy. Don't then, expect authors to give you the only thing which makes your organization possible—good plays.

SETTINGS, SCENERY, FURNITURE, PROPERTIES. Here the artistic ingenuity of your art staff will be requisitioned.

COSTUMES. You may be able to operate an entire season without expending much on costumes. Don't allow some enthusiastic designer to swamp the plays with oddities

and the treasurer with bills. One art director spent so much money for costumes of a one-act play in the first bill that the season was almost wrecked on that single production. By eschewing period and romantic material for the remainder of the winter the season was just successfully financed.

**LIGHTING.** If the equipment of your stage is good, this will cost practically nothing. If you use a non-professional stage, you can easily accumulate simple but effective lighting apparatus.

**MAKE-UP.** Hiring a professional make-up man usually saves money and annoyance. His stock of wigs is always better than an amateur collection. In many plays adequate make-up is required. A company make-up box is a great saving if individuals know how to use its contents. If an active member can make up the performers he should be pressed into participation.

**HAULING.** Scenery, properties, furniture, costumes may have to be moved. Costumers do not pay transportation charges.

**MISCELLANEOUS.** Perhaps this division should have been placed first, for though this heading is indefinite, it always covers a large amount. It may include anything; flowers, ropes, electric bulbs, unusual properties, telegrams, porter service, labor, lunches, beverages, damage to property, taxi-cab fares, insurance on borrowed property, music, wiring, tacks, broken dishes, doorman, delivery boy, expressage, hardware, window panes to be shattered, cigars, cigarettes, drinks, animals, birds, tips.

The following are copies of actual expense sheets of productions in various parts of the country. Inspection and



comparison of the items will indicate what matters must be considered and provided for in advance. Notice that costume hire and rental may be entailed or not incurred. The entries for scenery deserve thought. The sundries further illustrate the remarks made in the preceding paragraph on miscellaneous expenses.

SPECIMEN EXPENSE SHEETS

THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

Rental .....	\$ 46.50
Stage Help .....	18.00
Printing Programs .....	5.67
Printing Tickets .....	3.25
Photographs .....	16.00
Hauling .....	2.75
Doorman .....	2.00
Books .....	1.50
Scenery .....	66.95
Costumes and Make-up .....	24.70
Gold Paint .....	.85
Royalties .....	45.00
	<hr/>
	\$233.17

THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

Rental .....	\$ 61.50
Doorman .....	2.00
Books .....	1.75
Printing Tickets .....	8.75
Printing Programs .....	13.80
Expenses of Production Committee ..	48.80
Typing Parts .....	4.00
Make-up Material .....	3.50
Porter Service .....	1.00
	<hr/>
	\$145.10

A FULL-LENGTH PLAY

Rental .....	\$ 73.00
Books .....	14.45
Printing Tickets .....	6.80
Scenery .....	110.00
Stage Help .....	10.00
Expenses of Production Committee ..	27.50
	<hr/>
	\$241.75

## HIGH SCHOOL PRODUCTION

*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*

30 costumes, dress rehearsal and performance .....	\$ 75.00
Make-up, twice .....	15.00
Hauling .....	3.00
Typing parts .....	3.40
Janitor's fees .....	4.00
Printing programs, tickets .....	31.00
	<hr/>
	\$131.40

We shall assume that it is early autumn. Your organization is perfected. Your officers and committees have been working during the spring and summer if possible, or at least during several weeks, and reporting. Your funds are assured. The public is sympathetic in approval of your project. With all your thoughtful allowance for enthusiastic overstatement and optimistic credulity, indications of large, appreciative audiences are heartening you. Only one detail now remains to engage attention and time before your season opens.

What kind of plays will you offer?

## CHAPTER III

### CHOOSING THE PLAY

AFTER an organization for the presentation of plays has been perfected, the first question of importance which arises is, "What plays shall it produce?" The first limits to this question may be set forth by the provisions of your constitution or your public announcements. Let me quote a few such passages taken at random. I shall omit the names of the organizations.

This group "has been organized to encourage and foster the dramatic instinct in young people, to become familiar with the best dramatic literature through study and presentation, also with all the details of the art of stagecraft, to the end that the members may develop an enhanced sense of life's values and the realization of that culture which is characterized by cultivated imagination and sympathy, as well as information and knowledge."

"The object shall be to encourage the presentation of plays by amateurs, to secure unity of purpose and procedure in the giving of plays, to provide a systematic and diversified program of plays, to conserve available talent and material through their largest possible use, and to establish a Community Theater."

"The aim is to add something to the joy of life by the presentation of good music and worth while plays."

“Our aims are not hard to understand; to give drama with a literary quality, acted and staged with sincerity and artistic simplicity—in short, to study the community that its theater may express its ideals; to make of the theater a place where good drama, wholesome amusements, and intelligent recreation may be enjoyed; a place where may be seen those plays seldom seen on the commercial stage—and finally to encourage the creative spirit of our own people.”

“This is a permanent little theater organization whose policy is to produce new plays by unknown writers with the works of standard authors.”

“The aim of the Club has been to present to University audiences plays of literary worth by contemporary European and American dramatists, especially such plays as could hardly hope for presentation on the commercial stage, and to provide for undergraduates interested in the direction, staging, acting, designing, and writing of plays, some opportunity to develop their abilities.”

“This is a traveling group of actors organized to put on the best plays of the little theater and the new theater movements before clubs and other private audiences which otherwise might not have an opportunity to witness performances of these.”

“The purpose of this club shall be to study and rehearse significant plays, and to develop the dramatic expression of its members.”

“Our aim is not to present great plays by great writers, but sincere plays by beginners. We do not seek to uplift the drama, but to bring out the best there is in dramatic writing.”



“The workshop is an experimental theater where ideas may be worked out in actual stage practice. It will give plays by writers of this city and nothing but first productions.”

No matter how definitely some purpose has been stated in the constitution of the society, there arises continually the necessity of deciding which plays to select. The purpose may be so simple as “to provide entertainments of a dramatic character.” It may assert that only “plays exemplifying the new movement in the theater are to be acted.” It may intend to give plays by its own members only. Whatever its avowed purpose, decisions must be made among possible choices, so that the actual work of production may begin.

At just this point you had better—unless you are already acquainted with its terms and operation—investigate the copyright law of the United States. The item of royalty was mentioned in the previous chapter in the list of expenses. It seems strange that persons who would not think of taking and using a tack which does not belong to them will attempt to take and use what is infinitely more valuable, the product of an author’s brain, and then feel badly used when they are made to pay for their pleasure. No acting group, I venture to say, would deliberately take electric bulbs from a dealer without arranging for payment, yet scores of them in this country have used plays for which they have never paid a dollar. In fact, some persons resent the demand of royalty, even when the published play states clearly the terms of production. Mr. Shaw told a certain American amateur director exactly what he thought of her

insistence that he allow her to produce one of his works. Authors and publishers are more careful about this matter than they used to be. The fact may startle the uninitiated, but authors are not always anxious to have their plays performed by every one who thinks he can do justice to the material. You may be refused permission because some producer in your neighborhood has already arranged for the use of the same play. One author told me she had refused to allow one of her plays—a delicate, subtle handling—to be performed by a small agricultural college. She may have been mistaken, but her feeling induced her refusal. Many a dramatist who has sat through productions of his work has wished that he had refused.

Notices included in volumes of published plays should be quite clear in their intent. If you desire to make yourself entirely conversant with all the details of copyright you should apply for Copyright Bulletin, Number 14, issued by the Register of Copyrights, Library of Congress, Washington.

Bear in mind, also, that a play in manuscript or typescript, "not reproduced in copies for sale," as it is described by the Copyright Office, may have been copyrighted, and if it bears the notice, is as much the dramatist's private property—so far as performance is concerned—as though it were published in a solid looking book.

The two following notices, taken from two recent volumes of plays from different firms, seem to be clear enough, yet an officer of the first told me that hundreds of letters come to him asking for exactly the same information so clearly stated by the first notice.

## SPECIAL NOTICE

These plays in their printed form are designed for the reading public only. All dramatic rights in them are fully protected by copyright, both in the United States and in Great Britain, and no public or private performance—professional or amateur—*may be given without the written permission of the author and the payment of royalty.* As the courts have also ruled that the public reading of a play, for pay or where tickets are sold, constitutes a “performance,” no such reading may be given except under conditions as above stated. Any one disregarding the author’s rights renders himself liable to prosecution. Communications should be sent to the author, care of the publishers.

In its present form this play is dedicated to the reading public only, and no performances of it may be given without the permission of the authors who may be addressed in care of the publisher. Any piracy or infringement will be prosecuted in accordance with the penalties provided by the United States Statutes:

Sec. 4966.—Any person publicly performing or representing any dramatic or musical composition, for which copyright has been obtained, without the consent of the proprietor of the said dramatic or musical composition, or his heirs or assigns, shall be liable for damages in all cases to be assessed at such sum, not less than one hundred dollars for the first and fifty dollars for every subsequent performance, as to the Court shall appear to be just. If the unlawful performance and representation be wilful, and for profit, such person or persons shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction be imprisoned for a period not exceeding one year.—U. S. Revised Statutes, Title 60. Chap. 3.

It is unfortunate that the threat of prosecution and fine have to be set forth so plainly, but the past—and I regret to add it, present—practices of acting groups make it necessary.

The remarkable increase of interest in amateur play-production has had some unfortunate results. Several amateurs, it appears, have shown their lack of experience by putting on copyrighted plays without first securing permission. Doubtless few members of schools or clubs would wilfully infringe upon the rights of the owners of plays, but ignorance of the law excuses no one and carelessness can hardly be urged as a defense against prosecution for piracy.

Such prosecution at least one playwright feels compelled to institute. Mr. Charles Douville Coburn, who owns the rights of production of *The Yellow Jacket*, by George C. Hazelton and Benrimo, has learned of several instances of illegal use of this play, and in at least three cases must prosecute the offenders in order to conserve his own interests. All possible publicity should be given his experience in order that amateurs throughout the country may be saved from committing like offense.

*English Journal*, 1915.

There are literally thousands of good plays. One list of recent American one-act plays alone contains some two hundred sixty titles. A selected list of titles of plays suitable for schools and colleges includes over four hundred entries. How shall the best and most appropriate be chosen?

Four factors enter into all such considerations: 1. The tone or quality of your aims. 2. The actors. 3. The stage. 4. The audience.



So far as the first of these is concerned, you can easily declare that you desire to choose only the best plays written. That is the worthiest aim you can have for the quality of your material. If you decide to offer only farce, you should choose the best. If you venture into melodrama, you should try to select the best. If you turn to the classics, you should unfailingly select those which are best as drama.

The actors to whom you entrust the rôles will determine the range of your examination. Plays with large casts may be debarred in advance. Yet they might be exactly suited to schools and colleges, singing societies, church organizations, etc. Others with children's rôles may fall outside your group. A drama may require a certain physical type which your personnel does not include. You had better not attempt it, then, at the risk of miscasting a part. Amateurs and professional directors do make glaring errors in casting dramas, but avoid doing it, if you can. A play may not interest the performers. This is fatal for amateurs. Professionals will work with material when they are not enthusiastic about it. But amateurs, to be successful, must be congenial in their rôles. In amateur organizations casts have unanimously decided to return a play to the director, asking to be excused from performing in it. In other cases, individuals relinquish rôles, so that some thirty persons may attend rehearsals before five rôles are cast. Even attempting to impose a fine upon a member who cannot present a valid excuse for avoiding or relinquishing assignment of a rôle cannot successfully counteract this.

Likewise, the stage you use will eliminate certain plays. This consideration is not so important as it used to be, for

modern stagecraft has shown almost unbelievable effects upon small and simple stages.

Last of all, the audience must be considered. There is a tendency among some little theater enthusiasts to pretend that audiences can be totally disregarded. In some cases they may be, but the general practice is to present plays before audiences. Even the most intellectual or novel good plays should attract people who respond to their dramatic effects. A comedy which interests may be more stimulating than a Greek tragedy which bores both performers and audience. It is true that not the entire public of the community need be appealed to or considered, but a theater, to be even artistically successful, must find, attract, and hold *its* audience. This is generally accomplished by a gradual process of elimination and accretion, based on the inducing of a *rapport* between the stage and the house.

An amateur group which starts to build up a producing company should attempt at the same time to develop an appreciative audience, unless it exists already. Experimental societies will do well to follow the methods of their successful predecessors. Perhaps the best known organization of this kind was the Washington Square Players of New York. Novelties they gave by dozens. Yet the managing directors appear to have been careful never to repel their audiences. The bold, the bizarre, the startling, the advanced, was always "carried" by surrounding material, the effect of which could be predicted with certainty. By careful study and adjustment, this company was able to move its audience from the Washington Square district to a remote East Side theater on Fifty-Seventh Street, then to

the professional Comedy Theater. While the two organizations are not the same, it may be said that the successor to the Washington Square Players is the Theater Guild. This well-conceived body makes no pretense to catering to the large, indiscriminate, transient, theater-patronizing hordes of people in New York. Its hope was not to attract *the* public, but *a* public—a public its sponsors were convinced must exist in a city drawing its theater patrons from some ten million persons. It fortunately did not have to wait long before this interested patronage was consolidated. Not all its plays have followed the same standard, but it has not alienated its regular audiences, nor will it. The future will strengthen its influence for good drama in America.

On the other hand, many failures may be explained by an adherence to a principle the opposite of this. A signal failure and retirement from one city of what had promised to become a permanent and flourishing center of good unusual drama are attributed to a determined effort on the part of the director to force upon the public what it manifestly did not want. He was over-enthusiastic about Greek tragedy. The people he needed in his audience unmistakably indicated that they were satisfied with a small dose of such fare. The audience dwindled. The company disbanded. The director departed.

As a summary of the preceding, it may be stated as a general rule that, taking into consideration the physical limitations of your stage, the dramatic ability of your actors, and the compositions of authors, you should choose only the best plays.

The second question which will arise is, "Shall we produce full-length plays, or one-act plays?"

Full-length plays have certain advantages. They tell fully-developed and rounded-off stories. They have a significance because of their length. They give chances for real character delineation by the performers. They offer opportunities for more different kinds of characters. The actors have more changes of moods, more reactions to portray. As many full-length plays are set in one place, or in two different places, they may be easily and adequately mounted. Makeshift stage decoration—only too evident to the experienced audience—can be avoided by careful planning and arranging. If you have to provide your own scenery you might find the three or four sets for a bill of one-act plays beyond your resources, yet you might be able to pay for the one or two sets of a long play. It would be perfectly possible to give almost an entire season of long plays of which each would require only an easily secured interior.

The greatest advantage of the full-length plays is that this is the form most familiar to audiences. People have become accustomed to follow drama of this length and pattern. In offering full-length plays you are not attempting any education of the public. You are not required to overcome active prejudice or dull inertia. Children prefer long plots in connected acts, just as they always like continued or long yarns in the nursery. A most successful producer of plays for children writes me this fact about the capacity audiences of the young who attend his plays. During several seasons he has introduced a few matinées of short



plays, always with the confirmation of his experience that they are not as successful in appeal as are the longer versions. The grown-up theatrical audience is not very different from the child audience. It may consider the bill of one-act plays too disconnected. It may prefer one long impression to a series of short, though strong reactions. It describes its feeling as "getting out of the mood of the play." In proof of this one need merely recall the introduction of the short play into America—its difficulty of securing respectful attention as a dignified art form even now.

On the other hand, long plays are sometimes difficult for amateurs to interpret satisfactorily because the acting requires more ability than a fifteen-minute incident does. The plot is more complicated. There are more interwoven threads of story. The interrelation of characters is more subtly evolved. More different kinds of situations are built around the central theme. More delicate reactions are demanded. As the large effects are cumulative, the details contributory to them must be more gradually intensified. Events must not move so directly from start to finish. There must be more variety in actions. Characters have to develop, to change, and this variety of delineation becomes an exaction which must be carefully adjusted. In addition to this, inexperienced actors may find it difficult to "stand up" to the requirements of a rôle running through three or four acts. Acting consumes both nervous and physical energy. Amateurs are prone to forget this, yet they feel it later when the excitement vanishes and only the effects of the strain remain. If the cast enters the concluding act of a long play with no vigor, their efforts will

likely fall flat just when they should be most stirring. The leading rôles must be particularly well cast to balance these exacting demands made by a long play.

While many amateurs cling to the long play, most progressive groups have turned to the one-act form. The two chief deterrents to its even wider popularity are the expense and labor of setting it properly. Most long plays require the usual surroundings of everyday life. Theaters and halls have such scenery, or can provide it. One-act plays make the most startling demands—a lighthouse interior in *The Keepers of the Light*, a Paris Grand Guignol success by Autier and Cloquemin, the operating room of a hospital in *Laughing Gas* by Dreiser, a man's heart in *The Theater of the Soul* by Evreinov, the outside of an envelope in *Mrs. Calhoun* by Ben Hecht and Maxwell Bodenheim, a design in black and white in *Grotesques* by Cloyd Head, a portion of limitless space in eternity in *Beyond* by Alice Gerstenberg, a mantel-shelf in *Manikin and Minikin* by Alfred Kreymborg, the Gate of Heaven in *The Glittering Gate* by Lord Dunsany, the forecastle of a tramp steamer in *In the Zone* by Eugene O'Neill. As a bill of one-act plays includes three or four, the expense of many different settings may run high. Yet in making such stage decorations lies one of the keenest delights of play producing.

The lighthouse interior was simply made. A small octagonal room showed stone walls. An iron ladder rose from the darkness below through a trap towards the rear and mounted to the ceiling where it disappeared through another opening. A brilliant white glow which flashed at regular intervals through this ceiling opening gave a con-

vincing effect of the revolving light above while wind, rain, and waves yelled outside.

In *Laughing Gas* a bare room was supplied with real equipment for the reproduction of a hospital operation. Manipulation of lights reinforced the changing waves of emotion during the action.

In *The Theater of the Soul* faces appeared from deep darkness into light of varying intensities at different levels. The heart was a glowing red space which seemed to pulsate owing to the effect of fluctuating light. Real persons appeared in the full light of the foreground.

White designs cut and applied to black curtains and costumes and figures of only black and white appearing in white light produced the decorative impression of *Grotesques*.

In *Beyond* the author states that "the scene suggests limitless space and mist and is played behind a curtain of gauze." Around the entire stage should be hung a curtain of blue, a cyclorama or horizon, stretching high above. The uneven effect below, stipulated by the dramatist, can easily be made by placing boxes, boards, inclined planes, tables, etc., upon the stage, and covering the entire collection with canvas falling in folds. By concentrating light upon the face of the single character, the effect of limitless space could be conveyed to spectators.

The mantel-shelf may sound difficult, because how can the wall between it and the floor be indicated? In one production the mantel was built just above stage level. Behind it a flat yellow wall was placed. Just behind the proscenium opening was hung a darker yellow curtain in

which a large elliptical opening had been cut. All the light was behind this framing curtain.

The Gate of Heaven should tower high above a few rocks upon the stage itself. Behind this gate a blue drop or horizon should be hung. Stars may be made by piercing small holes in this curtain and throwing a white or yellow light upon it from the rear. The base of the gate should be above the stage level to suggest limitless space below.

A wall sloping down towards one corner of the stage with rude bunks built against it, a low ceiling, making a shallow stage space, would suggest the narrow, cramped fore-castle of a tramp steamer required by *In the Zone*. A translucent white oblong curtain bordered by opaque black formed the envelope in *Mrs. Calhoun*. The stamp, postmark, and written address were painted upon it. Characters stepped from the end of the envelope into the forepart of the stage and there carried on the action.

Ingenious designing, slow and careful planning, a knowledge of how to produce results with simple means will bridge many a seeming abyss in amateur producing.

The second difficulty in offering one-act plays is the usual attitude of audiences towards them. In spite of the years during which good, bad, and impossible short plays have been offered in vaudeville, and the great vogue of this short form on the European continent, American audiences have to be trained to respond heartily to them. The Princess Theater in New York, which advertised a few years ago that no one under twenty-one would be admitted, could not remain open with one-act bills, even with that spur to



curiosity. Other instances of the same kind could be adduced. Although the Theater Guild of New York fell heir to the audiences of the Washington Square Players and several of their performers, it did not pursue the previous policy of bills of one-acts, but has from the very first staged full-length dramas. Yet there are noticeable already some results of the activities of little theater groups. People are being educated to appreciate one-act plays as a worthy form of drama.

Reasons for choosing one-act plays greatly outweigh the reasons against them. In the first place, most of the greatest dramatists have produced remarkable material in this form. Most consistent creators of drama in Europe have at some time conceived and written short plays. Without any effort a general reader can jot down a long list of names:—Andreev, Barrie, Benavente, D'Annunzio, De Musset, Dunsany, Evreinov, France, Giacosa, Gregory, Hankin, Houghton, Jones, Maeterlinck, Masefield, Schnitzler, Shaw, Strindberg, Sudermann, Sutro, Symons, Synge, Tchekoff, Wilde, Yeats. The list of Americans would contain quite as many names, although because of the different status of the short form with us, there would occur not so large a representation of our best known dramatic writers. Such authors as just listed alone would lead to production of their one-act dramas. There are additional inducements. One-act plays are usually easy for the performers. They do not require any great changes or developments of character delineation. They make keen appeals, all the more poignant because short. They usually

require only small casts, making easy the choice of actors, and the progress of rehearsals. They are amateur material *par excellence*.

The most alluring feature of short plays is the characteristic already cited as a probable difficulty—the demands of their stage settings. They offer the widest scope for originality, for novelty, for ingenuity, for beauty. They provide the experimental material, in which a falling short is not a heinous crime, but in which a signal success may reform or revolutionize stage production to such a degree that it may reach even the professional stage. Naturally, a beginning organization, acting before a tolerant audience, will have to be careful not to introduce too many startling effects. But every performance can step more and more decidedly along the newer paths to entire originality of theme and treatment. Thus, if the audience is not at the beginning prepared for novel methods, the productions, always keeping in advance but never losing sympathetic contact, can lead on to pantomime, to spoken lines without action, to so-called static drama in which the idea alone progresses, to characters playing in zones of different colored lights, to draped stages, to stylization, to conventionalized sets, to silhouetting the actors, and all the other attractive experimental newer methods.

Of the choice of plays themselves, the guiding principle should be variety. The list of kinds of plays is as long today as it was when Polonius tried to tell to Hamlet the sorts offered by the traveling players. Drama, tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce, fantasy, classic, poem-mime, legitimate, satire, burlesque, allegory, spectacle, parody,



Photographs by Jessie Tarbox Beals

*The Emperor Jones*, by Eugene O'Neill, Provincetown  
Theater, New York.



Photographs by Kajiwara

THE ARTISTS' GUILD, Saint Louis. Plays by Lord  
Dunsany.

Above: *Tents of the Arabs*. Designed by Irving  
Pichel and Harlan Frazer.

Below: *A Good Bargain*. Designed by Lawrence  
Ewald. This play was written especially for this  
organization.



problem, farce-comedy, vaudeville, comedietta, interlude, extravaganza, burletta, harlequinade, tragi-comedy, curtain-raiser, pantomime, proverbe, mumming, masque, monodrama, juvenile; the enumeration may be extended even further.

Learn to know quickly when you have chosen the wrong kind. Learn—and this is more important—exactly why it is inappropriate. Of the countless factors which enter into the impression made by a performance you should be able to seize at once the operative detractive cause, so that in all future attempts that one may be eliminated. Judge all later possibilities from past experiences.

Never offend the sensibilities of your audience. A professional producer might decide to risk a performance which will stir up antagonism, although I never heard of one who did, but he is offering a thing for public patronage. People need no more attend his theater than they need smoke a certain brand of poor cigarette. If he is an acute commercial manager he will soon change his plan of approaching the public or his theater will cease to be a paying investment, and some one else will be using his stage. But in amateur dramatics there should be—there always is—a different relation between performers and audience. When you have seen your audience display respectful boredom because you are enthusiastically offering a second Greek drama, do not doggedly set your teeth and utter, "Greek tragedy is good for them;—they've got to like it!" Try to appreciate the fact that all kinds of people compose theatrical audiences. Indifference to acted classic drama is not in itself a sign of ignorance. The variety

simply does not elicit the wide response of other forms. Of course antique plays can be made beautiful. Some of them present stories of universal significance, yet these are rather few. The most scholarly persons, who know the conditions of original presentation in the great open air under the brilliant sunlight and azure skies of Greece, are just as likely as the non-classicist to resent the restriction of a great old tragedy to a cramped interior stage tinted with electric light. Don't force a long series of Irish one-act plays upon them. While many plays written under the impetus of the Irish Renaissance are worth producing, there are others with no appeal outside the Abbey Theater, and if we may believe some of the interested members of that group itself, with not much appeal to audiences in that building. Intention does not mean achievement in dramatics. A few of the Irish farces and comedies are laughable. Some of the dramas are ingenuous rather than ingenious, while not a few of the attempted poetic dramas are misty rather than mysterious. Don't make audiences sit through too many costumed romances. Don't give a long series of situations depicting the down-trodden laboring man. Spare the triangle, whether right-angled or any other kind. Learn to build up a bill or a season as the careful leader of a symphony orchestra arranges either a single program or a series of successive concerts. Intellectual relief does not mean a sinking below the level of your audience and your own ideals. Many a laugh-provoking comedy is as stimulating intellectually as a preaching problem play.

Study the programs of successful organizations, the plans

of their seasons. Specimen illustrations of several of these are reproduced and discussed in the next chapter. At times directors attempt plebiscites of their audiences, requesting them at the end of a season to indicate on a blank form their first choices of the best bill, the best single play, the best produced, the best acted. While such schemes are excellent in principle, the returns are disappointingly few in proportion to the size of audiences. The most famous one-act theater in the world, the Grand Guignol of Paris, makes up its bills of six short plays of three *très leste*, as the Parisians say, that is, three "shockers," and three horrors. Reference has already been made to a bill of sure effects to "carry" the bizarre novelty or the startling experiment. As performers and audience grow in accord, the productions should show decided advances in quality of material and originality of treatment. If your audiences become theater trained—for people can be educated in dramatic exactly as they can be in musical appreciation—you may try anything. But never lose sight of the principle of variety and relief. Even when the bill is announced as *Plays from the Italian* there should be no two closely similar. An evening might include the passionate drama of the Middle Ages, *The Dream of an Autumn Sunset* by D'Annunzio, the poetic *Game of Chess* by Giacosa, and the scandalous but laughable *Honorable Lover* by Bracco. An Irish bill could secure variety by including a symbolic poem by Yeats, a farce-comedy by Synge, a genre study by Lady Gregory, and a satire by G. Bernard Shaw. Even a bill of "lover" plays could be varied, for it could range from the delicate exaggeration of *The Constant*

*Lover* by St. John Hankin to the realistic bitingness of *The Magnanimous Lover* by St. John Ervine. A program of plays with "unspoken lines" might be announced. This phrase, perhaps, does not clearly indicate the kind of thing it attempts to describe, but illustration will make this clear. There are some—though not many—interesting novelties in which the lines are not actual speeches delivered by the characters, but their thoughts, their feelings, their hardly conscious sentiments. Tragedy could be found for this in Evreinov's *Theater of the Soul* which displays the confused feelings and thoughts of a man in the few seconds before he shoots himself. For contrast the next might be the satirical series of impressions by H. L. Mencken entitled *The Artist*. This shows the thoughts of the usual group at an afternoon piano recital, including the janitor and the artist himself. More piquancy is added by the necessity of making the audience part of the *mise-en-scène*. This is screamingly funny. Other varieties are not so easy to find, but a good balance can be secured by inserting Alice Gerstenberg's *Overtones* which includes both spoken words by the two women characters—the overtones—and their real natures who deliver their actual thoughts covered by the speeches of ordinary conversation.

Three plays on the same theme, with entirely different treatments, would constitute a novel arrangement. I am informed of one single set made to illustrate the principle here suggested. The author chose the frequently exploited theme of "the woman unjustly suspected," then worked it out in farce, comedy, and tragedy. Up to a certain point all three plays are exactly alike; with the appearance of



the motivating force the divergences begin. You could even secure variety by repeating one act from a Shakespeare drama in several different manners—Elizabethan, the usual way, in the modern style, etc. The best method for such an experiment would be for the various directors to agree upon the schemes they would follow. If possible the performers should be kept in ignorance of everything except their own interpretations. Even the scenery should not be displayed until the dress rehearsal, and if practicable, each cast should be rehearsed at a different time to prevent any one from absorbing another's delivery or stage business. One producer could merely ask the local costumer to supply costumes for the scene, accepting anything he sent. A second might reproduce some famous artist's designs, as those of Boutet de Monvel or Byam Shaw. The third might take a hint from the Russian school of art directors, or from such strange models as Granville Barker's colorful and animated *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In Petrograd, Evreinov gave the first act of *The Inspector-General* several times in one evening in the different styles of modern stage methods. He imitated the systems of the Moscow Art Theater, of Gordon Craig, etc., parodying the efforts of fanatics who want to make of the theater something new and strange. Such a performance might not attract a large general audience, but it should be an instructive and stimulating kind of work for a little theater or amateur acting group.

As you learn more and more about material for amateur acting you will feel the temptation growing stronger and stronger to devote more care and energy to production. This

side of amateur production has been developed more than any other. Of course acting has changed and amateurs are reflecting the better methods of the realistic manner. Yet acting is not so easy to transmit by the printed page. No difference in equipment is needed to change acting. A new stage setting is a picture which can be perpetuated in photograph and illustration. It can be *seen* by the entire world. To judge acting every person must sit through a performance. And to see some of the best acting one sometimes has to sit through the worst plays. A case to illustrate this is the American tour of *The Lodger*, an uninteresting play by Vachell which contained two such finished performers as Beryl Mercer and Lionel Atwell, now fully established among the notables of our professional drama.

Books and magazines have emphasized the artistic, scenic, lighting, costume, phases of plays. During the last ten years, floods of material relating to such topics have nearly swamped the student. Professional dressmakers, reputed artists, famous architects, have been lured into participation, and in many instances, advertisement. Skilful publicity has achieved its usual result with the American populace—it is well acquainted with all the names and descriptions, although it may never have seen the actual thing. So we glibly discuss horizons, cycloramas, indirect lighting, Fortuny banners, Reinhardt's circus methods, platform and revolving stages, without realizing at all the insuperable impracticability of most of them for limited stages and incomes. Some of the mistakes perpetrated under unintelligent enthusiasm have been more costly in effort than in mere money. One well-known book on mod-

ern aspects of the theater contains discussions of everything except the acting! It is only just to add that many of the attempts have resulted in significant results and advance. Up to a certain point this striving for decorative or stylistic effect is laudable, for as acting is the most difficult of all the arts, it is in methods of production that amateurs can do most. But remember always as a corrective to this that "the play's the thing." Never kill a good play by over-production. Never slight the first requisite of dramatics—good acting.

In order to choose wisely you must know many plays. The best way to become thoroughly acquainted with a play is to see it acted. For amateur plays this is, in most cases, manifestly impossible. You must read plays. Your fellow actors and even non-acting associates must read plays. Fortunately the best plays—full-length and one-act—are now fairly accessible in print. Read announcements and notices of all things dramatic. Attend as many performances as you can. Above all, keep lists and notes of all plays you consider in the slightest degree possible for production by your organization.

The foregoing may appear a great deal to consider in a matter which may seem to be merely a preliminary, but any director will tell you that when a play has been rightly selected and properly cast, the longest step has been taken towards its successful performance.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOME SPECIMEN PROGRAMS

IN order to secure enough material from which to make intelligent choice of single plays to include in a program or a season, the direction was given to study the announcements and lists of other organizations, especially the most successful. In doing this, a beginning director should not be content with merely glancing at a group of titles, and deciding that certain dramas made deep impressions upon previous audiences, therefore they will be well suited to his. This is seldom the case. It was never made so clear to me before as it was during talks with the director of the British Arts League of Service, a unique organization which, by means of lorries, takes bills of one-act plays to small towns, villages, and out-of-the-way places where otherwise regular drama would never penetrate. Dealing almost entirely with persons who have never been theater trained, the director has to choose the plays most carefully. That such a delicate adjustment can be made is indicated by a recent tour of six weeks made by this troupe with one or two performances every day.

It will not be enough, therefore, that the director merely inspect the arrangement and titles of the offerings of other organizations—he must try to extract or deduce the *principles* underlying the choice and order. To accomplish this with most certainty he should know audiences as well as



plays, but failing of omniscience he must approximate as well as he can. Though he may learn keenness of judgment from the best commercial choosers in the world, he must constantly temper that knowledge by the active corrective that most amateur productions strive for upward stimulations, increased alertness, and dramatic advance, as well as justifiable entertainment, whereas any professional or commercial attempt ends with the realization of adequate diversion and large profits.

I recall that an orchestra director once told me that the place for a symphony on an evening's program was first, immediately after the members of the audience have come in from the streets, and while their minds and temperaments are still open, fresh, and unprejudiced. Yet in actual arrangements I have not seen that principle followed in many concerts. Granting that such an order might be a good one for music, one must declare that it would hardly produce the keenest satisfaction in a succession of short plays.

The most helpful procedure for considering this extremely important problem which confronts directors at all times is to examine a few programs—first of single bills of short plays, then of entire seasons, comment upon them, and finally, try to enunciate a few guiding principles which have been followed, and which may serve again.

Let us look first at this bill of individually excellent plays:—*The Drawback* by Maurice Baring, *Augustus in Search of a Father* by Harold Chapin, *Joint Owners in Spain* by Alice Brown, *Her Tongue* by Henry Arthur Jones. Every one of these is a good play, and could be

done with remarkably good effect if well produced. The first is a mere dialogue between a youth and a maiden in which by persistent and insistent questioning she discovers a slight impediment to their marriage. It is delightfully and decidedly English. So too is the next, in which an old street watchman talks to his graceless son returned from America, without discovering the night prowler's identity. Perhaps to balance the all-male cast of this, *Joint Owners* in Spain followed. Here in quaint and delightful fashion, two inmates of an old woman's home arrange life on an attractive basis, in spite of past tempers and present irritations. *Her Tongue* veers very close to farce. A wealthy English planter back from Argentine believes his friend has found a nice quiet wife for him, but discovers what the title of the play indicates.

Evidently, since *Joint Owners* has proved to be what is expressively described as "sure-fire" or "fool-proof" it was placed at what by common consent is designated as the best place, the high point of the bill. The last offering is intended to send the audience home in a satisfied, good humor. The unusualness of the material in the first, reinforced by the charm of the girl, and emphasized by the helpless predicament of the youth, was to arrest the scattered interest. The second play, with its suggestion of serious pathos, was to benefit by the contrast. All these considerations were present in the mind of the director or committee. Centering our thought upon the psychology of the theater audience, we are conscious of this query:—Is there enough contrast in this bill to hold attention, to produce a heightened effect, to build up to a climax? Notice

that there is not once a decidedly picturesque appeal to the eye, to the sense of sight. There is no inclusion of the romantic, the poetic, the suggestive, the deeply imaginative, the extravagant, the stimulating. All the settings are modern, and rather ordinary. The characters are like us. The costumes are those of today. The situations are not extremely unusual. There are no heightened effects. No single play stands out as especially significant in material or treatment. Such a combination always is likely to produce an impression of drab monotony upon the audience. Each play, considered separately, is a good play. Each play, presented with such companions, suffers from fellowship with them.

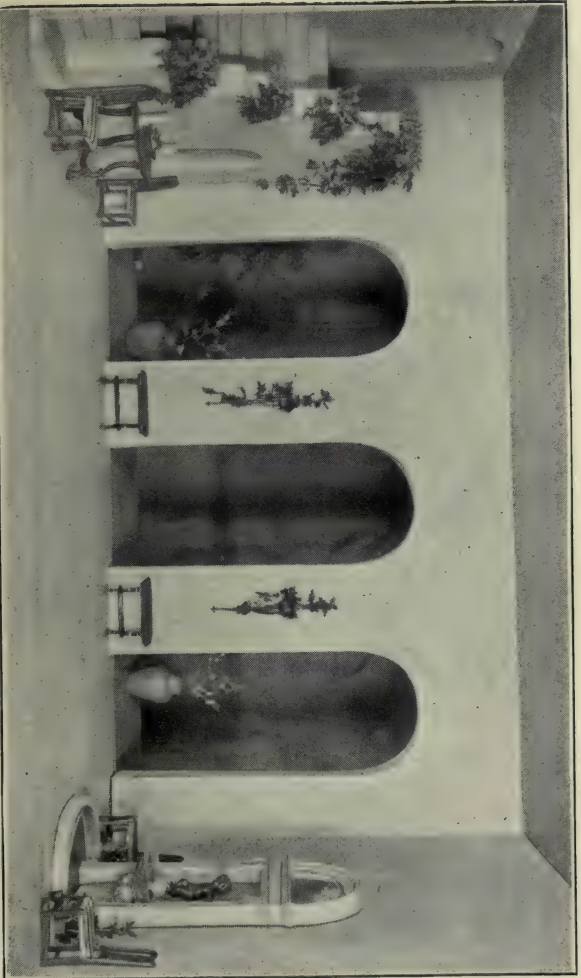
Frequently the laudable effort to secure contrast or variety o'erleaps itself and falls on the other side. To correct this, the director or committee must consider carefully the tastes and feelings of the audience. In a bill of three one-acts presented in a small open-air theater to refined people of much theater experience, one play dealt with a probable unseen source of thoughts which may sway the lives of individuals, while the second was a tried and proven success, an actable burlesque of modern play-writing. So far the offerings provided mystery and broad satire. Assuredly what the bill needed was some brilliant spectacular or poetically imaginative appeal. Yet the bill opened with a French farce, *The Sponge Cure*, described on the programs as "another rattling, ridiculous romp." As its water-throwing, slap-stick pushing and mawling progressed one could see the disgusted spectators curling up around the edges at its coarseness and inappropriateness.

Of course, the directors, being wise, replaced it immediately.

A program from a different city opened with *Aren't They Wonders?* by Charles F. Nirdlinger. While this is not remarkable for anything it will pass for a first place item. The second place was given to *Bushido* (also known as *Matsuo*) by Takeda Izumo, first made famous by the picturesque production of the Washington Square Players. The striking variety of these two plays made the choice of a concluding item delicately difficult. It might have been better to delay *Bushido* until last, placing just before it some markedly realistic modern "shocker" or daring novelty. *Bushido* would inevitably lift the evening above the ordinary level. There was great risk of a sudden drop after it. The jolt was administered to the tensed sensibilities by *Choosing a Career* by G. A. de Caillavet, a rough and tumble situation of mistaking an interloper for a vigorous masseur. For a jollification at a convention of druggists, no one would object to such a farce, although even for such an occasion it is not nearly so funny as the scene in the osteopath's office presented in the *Follies* a few years back. But for an audience who had just been stirred by the combination of all the dramatic and theatric elements of *Bushido*, this insignificant conclusion was completely outside the tone, the mood, the spirit of the evening.

It is true that in many instances the quality of the acting or the appeal of the stage picture will restore the balance disturbed by injudicious choice or mistaken order. Quite as frequently the opposite will spoil all anticipations, and what was chosen and placed to be the strongest part of the program, drops far below the general level. The first half





Design by Fakes-Bisbee-Robertson, Inc.

This design for a room, made by professional interior decorators, indicates how a stage model should be constructed. Doors, windows, hangings, back-drops, furniture, and rearrangement of parts will make it available for many different plays.



Photograph © Hugh Thomas



Above: *The Beggar's Opera*, by John Gay. This setting, designed by C. Lovat Fraser for the Lyric Theater, Hammersmith, London, was reproduced for the United States. It represents exteriors as well as interiors. —

Below: *The Rivals*, by Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh.

of the following four component parts to be considered here promised a rising scale. The first short play, *The Idol*, by P. B. Corneau, presented a fateful, poetic theme of remote India, in which princes are doomed to become warriors and rulers, instead of being allowed to become the poets and priests they would prefer to be. Quietly, slowly acted in the shadow of the great idol, it induced attention and sympathy in the audience. The second item might at first glance appear to carry on merely the same feelings, and doubtless many thought so as they read of *The Prodigal Son* by Harry Kemp, "sometime before the beginning of the Christian era, on a hill town in Galilee." All the force of contrast burst forth in startling surprise as the situation rapidly developed into an extravagant satire, parody, and burlesque of all things in general. Running the risk of shocking the sensibilities of a few, this skit, in this bill provided an excellent contrast. In parenthesis, it also is a contribution on the side wherein little theaters show their greatest lack, the less drab, serious, lugubrious mediums. Evidently in this program the strongest impression was to be made by *Barbara* by K. S. Goodman. This trifle purports to be a burlesque on the crook motives still popular on all stages. By bad acting and inadequate production this became a tedious bore, so that the palm of the evening was captured by the last drama, *Their Country* by N. M. Kahn and M. Leishin. It would be a mistake to include this in many bills now, for it showed a war detail no longer of wide appeal. By timeliness and perfection of delineation in most of the rôles, it was lifted far above the general level of the evening. A Jewish father and mother, who have

been opposing the efforts of their son to enlist as a soldier, are brought by the headline in the newspaper of the capture of Jerusalem to the astounding realization that through "their country" the world struggle concerns them nearly.

The best series of one-act bills to study is that of the Washington Square Players. Through all their varying fortunes they provided valuable examples of what to do and how to do it. Their selections are better for investigation than those of other organizations because they acted so many plays already available in print, or shortly after published. Many newer and supposedly more original groups confine themselves so closely to absolutely new creations that the material is for a long time in typescript, and therefore only secured by the distant producer with much difficulty, effort, and expense. One of the worthiest rules the Washington Square Players followed was to build a program so carefully that most of it carried the uncertain, the startling, the outré. Every plan for either a single evening or a long season should be based upon this. Secondly, variety was never forgotten. If the themes themselves did not offer the variety, treatment to provide it was evolved. One or two bills will illustrate these statements.

A program of "Comedies of Nations" was arranged. Out of the countless possibilities these four were chosen:—Austrian—*Literature* by Arthur Schnitzler, American—*Overtones* by Alice Gerstenberg, Italian—*The Honorable Lover* by Roberto Bracco, French—*Whims* by Alfred de Musset.

In spite of some quite serious mistreatments in the actual



production, this was an excellent selection. Here are the faults plainly stated. The translator or producer of the first play, *Literature*, brutally and inexcusably changed material and situation until the play was not only quite different from its original, but it lost its final point and effect entirely. The violation of the text can be indicated without detailing the material. In the original all of the characters are on stage at the final line, which is sardonically delivered by the novelist. As here acted only the Baron and his mistress were on the stage:—the novelist had been allowed to drift off at some indeterminate time much earlier. This butchery of the play you will comprehend if you read the translation in *Comedies of Words*. The reputation and success of *Overtones* are too well-known to need any comment here. It was undoubtedly felt that *The Honorable Lover* might be caviare to the general unless the daringness of its theme and ideas was carried beyond the realm of the realistic. Setting, speed, mode of interpretation were exaggerated until a spectator was carried away by the verve of the ensemble and forgot entirely such usual matters as everyday marital contracts. To the great credit of the organization it must be said that this production induced in audiences just that receptivity declared by Charles Lamb to be the only proper mood for appreciating the scandalous artificial comedy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

The unusualness of *Overtones*, the shocks of *The Honorable Lover* made most welcome the exaggerated precious sentimentality of the last—which might much better have been called *Caprice* in English as it is in French. Again

the telescoped adaptation was as little like the original as the acting was like that of the de Musset pieces at the Comédie Française, but the trifle was exquisitely surrounded, the costumes evoked the past, and the daintiness of the dancer, Lydia Lopokova, made up for the discarded elements, because these did not impair, as did the changes in *Literature*, the mild but charming dramatic effect of the little play.

Another bill of this same group will further illustrate the principles already laid down. *Trifles*, by Susan Glaspell was produced as convincingly as though the scene were being lived before your eyes. With a welcome rebound from the cold stark middle West, *Another Way Out*, by Lawrence Langner poked fun at one of the Greenwich Village ménages. It may have been scandalous, but in a New York theater it was so funny that no one cared. I have seen this same play produced far from New York by directors who knowing little of the original milieu have by a too marked striving after effect in the costumes cheapened and lowered the tone of the entire play. *Bushido* not only harrowed the emotions, as did *Trifles*, it added all the romantic connotation of old Japan; and it also lured the eye by its colorful and brilliant costumes. From this tragedy the recoil was bound to be to extravagant farce. This was provided in *Altruism* by Karl Ettinger, in which the dazzling yellow sun on the red and white striped awning over the café on the Seine quay prepared for the startling rapidity of the afternoon in the life of a Parisian beggar who, when his day is done, turns down his ragged trousers, buttons his

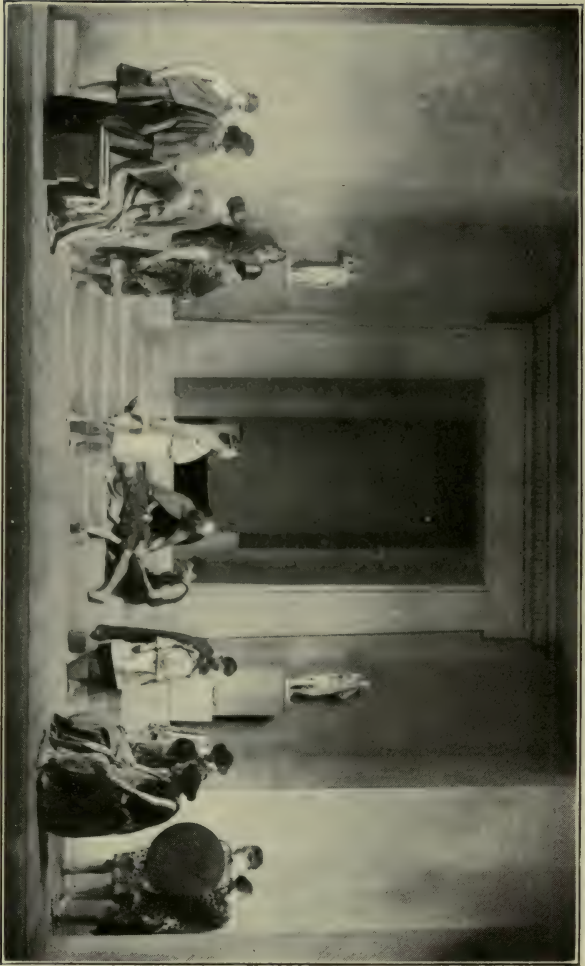


Photograph by Niquette



Photograph by Eric Stahlberg

*False Gods*, by Eugene Brieux, Smith College, Northampton. First production in America.



*Atalanta in Calydon*, by A. C. Swinburne. Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh.



shirt collar, dons his fashionable coat, reclaims his cane, calls his taxicab, and rolls away.

This order illustrates the principle of contrast or variety. The next will show that and in addition the careful provision that each part of a bill shall reinforce and help "carry" all the other portions.

When the Washington Square Plays were sent on tour many of the New York successes had to be discarded. Recognition of differences in audiences dictated that elimination. Some were retained because of the renown they had spread. Costumes, it was known, would help others. Contemporary allusions would make others timely. In one city the following evening of five one-acts made up the entertainment.

The audience was attracted first by *In April* by Rose Pastor Stokes. So simple, direct, and pathetic was the appeal of this scene that every listener was won to sympathetic attention. No attempt was made to utilize that stirred sympathy in the next item. On the contrary, entirely different emotions were appealed to in *The Roadhouse in Arden* by Philip Moeller, in which extravagant fun is provided by Shakespeare and Bacon around the interesting but workaday matter of creatingactable plays. This skit had all the effect of a colored cartoon. The next place—the middle of the program—was filled by the only really significant play of the evening, *A Miracle of Saint Anthony* by Maurice Maeterlinck. Here was a treatment which might appear at first glance almost sacrilege, but which as the action progressed became plainer as the expo-

sition by ironic and soberly satiric methods of a deeply moving spiritual truth. In it realism and mystery met on common ground. In permanency of impression this was the climax of the performance.

The necessary relief from the tenseness of the religious homily was provided by Anton Tchekoff's *A Bear*. I believe some other play would have served the purpose better, but this one requires only three performers in an easily set interior. The action is so noisy that it seemed too boisterous for the company and the theater-trained audience. As there must be no uncertainty of effect at the end of an evening, an assured success must be included. If it could be unusual to the point of startling, colorful to the limit of dazzling, familiar yet surprising, literary yet including timely allusions, farcical to the height of uproariousness, so much the better. All these ingredients went into the composition of Philip Moeller's *Helena's Husband*; every one of them impresses some portions of all audiences.

If more examples of good program planning are desired they are afforded by the following, chosen from groups in all parts of the United States.

I. *The Florist Shop* by Winifred Hawkbridge; sentimental, pathetic comedy with slight plot, admitting of any kind of treatment. *Joint Owners in Spain*. *Glory of the Morning* by Ellery Leonard; a drama of real power with American Indian and French settler costumes in forest scenery. *The Lost Silk Hat* by Lord Dunsany; a farcical whimsicality with a cast of all men which nicely balances the all-women cast of *Joint Owners*.

II. *The Girl in the Coffin* by Theodore Dreiser; a powerful drama of modern tragedy in a large mill town. Somber but excellent. *The Man of Destiny* by G. Bernard Shaw; comic treatment of Napoleon at twenty-six, on the verge of a romantic adventure in Italy, 1796.

III. *The Constant Lover* by St. John Hankin; a charming dialogue in a woodland setting on the theme that "constant" does not have to mean "with the same girl." *The Queen's Enemies* by Lord Dunsany; a tragedy of old Egypt in a stone chamber below the Nile. In this the costumes help much. *Master Pierre Patelin*; fifteenth century French farce, with picturesque settings, extravagant situations, and historical novelty.

IV. *Simoon* by August Strindberg; a passionate tragedy in a marabout during a sandstorm. *His Widow's Husband* by Jacinto Benavente; a modern comedy of an extravagant—but possible—after-effect of a life. *Pierrot and the Widow* by Olin Williams and Marie Barrett, a pantomime.

V. *Lonesome-Like* by Harold Brighthouse; a bit of Lancashire sentiment. *The Marriage Will Not Take Place* by Alfred Sutro; a dialogue of English society. *In the Zone* by Eugene O'Neill; a tense war play of a tramp steamer forecastle. *Everybody's Husband* by Gilbert Cannan; delicate fantasy of the dreams of a girl the night before her wedding; variations on the theme, "all husbands are just alike."

VI. *Over the Hills* by John Palmer; a comedy of the call of the open road which reaches a sedentary husband. *Circles* by George Middleton; a problem of the marital relationship as it affects the second generation. *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets* by G. Bernard Shaw; extravagant fooling with Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth.

VII. *The Maker of Dreams* by Oliphant Down; dainty Pierrot costume fancy. *The Dumb Cake* by Arthur Morrison and Richard Pryce; pathetic sentiment in a London areaway. *A Night at an Inn* by Lord Dunsany; a gripping tragic combination of realism and supernaturalism developed by an all-men cast.

Before passing on from this topic of selection and arrangement of one-act bills there is one modifying statement to add. Among all unforeseen things theatrical the strangest is the change made in anticipations by realization. So every principle of good selection and climactic sequence ever enunciated is likely to be nullified by the two always variable factors of the production—the quality of the acting, and the audience. Why is it that *Why Marry?* should succeed everywhere in America, yet fail in London? Why is it that *The "Ruined" Lady* should please Londoners, yet bore New Yorkers? Why is it that Russians (we are told) acclaim *The Cherry Orchard* a masterpiece, yet every performance I have heard reported, or have sat through myself, contradicts the rhapsodies of those enthusiasts who have never seen a performance? Why did Miss Maude Adams, so successful in everything else allow herself to be



drawn into so certain a failure as *Chanticleer*? Why was *The Jest* acclaimed by every American critic, yet coldly criticized by so many in London?

Great acting can frequently raise the effect of an ordinary play to signal success. Poor acting can destroy even a so-called "fool-proof" drama. Any consideration of the acting falls outside this present chapter, but the influence of the actual impersonators of the rôles must always be kept in mind while arrangements are being outlined.

The second factor is one already listed as of great importance in determining play selection. The danger of simply and repeatedly "giving the public what it wants" always results in giving the public what some hidebound and narrow-minded producer *thinks* it wants. The opposite attempt—to make audiences come to a theater to sit through only what the manager *wants* to produce results just as fatally. One of two ideals must be followed or combined—you must find the public for your plays, or you must find the plays for your public;—or you may to some extent combine them.

The inclusion of long plays introduces more weightily the factor of the acting ability of the company. Although it is not an amateur group, the New York Theater Guild has that stability, and that policy, and that audience, which reflect most nearly the conditions surrounding an amateur repertory or community theater. As the kind of play changes, and the demands for number, appearance, ability, vary, the personnel of the company varies. Here the quality of play is decided upon first, then the company is recruited to fit it. In most amateur groups the process

would have to be reversed. The quality of the acting is more or less decided; plays, then, must be chosen to fit it.

The suitability of any single play is too dependent upon local contingencies to be more than broadly hinted at here. No one can decide the momentous matter of choosing a full-length play unless he knows everything about the acting group, the director, the stage scenery and equipment, the audience, what material has preceded and what will follow.

A couple of lists will indicate how some organizations have decided for themselves this matter of sequence in long plays. All of these are so well known that no comment is necessary. Many of these are particularized to some degree in the Appendix list of two hundred plays suitable for amateurs.

I. *The Lady from the Sea* by Henrik Ibsen. *The Learned Ladies* by Molière. *The Thunderbolt* by A. W. Pinero. *The Maternal Instinct* by Robert Herrick. *The Passing of the Torch* by Paul Hervieu. *The Stranger* by G. Giacosa. *The Coffee House* by Carlo Goldoni. *June Madness* by Henry K. Webster.

II. *Lady Patricia* by Rudolph Besier. *The Pigeon* by John Galsworthy. *The Gods of the Mountain* by Lord Dunsany. *Sacred Ground* by G. Giacosa. *Hedda Gabler* by Ibsen.

III. *A Woman's Way* by Thompson Buchanan. *Prunella* by Laurence Housman. *The Truth* by Clyde Fitch. *Pina-*

fore by Gilbert and Sullivan. *Green Stockings* by A. W. E. Mason. *The Learned Ladies* by Molière. *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. *The World and His Wife* by José Echegaray. *You Never Can Tell* by G. Bernard Shaw. *Her Husband's Wife* by A. E. Thomas. *Fanny and the Servant Problem* by Jerome K. Jerome. *Mrs. Bumstead-Leigh* by H. J. Smith.

IV. *Joy* by John Galsworthy. *The Playboy of the Western World* by John M. Synge. *An Eye for an Eye* by I. L. Caragiale. *The Golden Apple* by Lady Gregory.

V. *The Pigeon* by Galsworthy. *Magic* by G. K. Chesterton. *The Cassilis Engagement* by St. John Hankin. *Art and Opportunity* by Harold Chapin. *The Harlequinade* by Calthrop and Barker. *Don* by Besier.

The evident means for securing greatest variety at minimum of effort—at least in planning—is to combine in a season both one-act and full-length plays. Regular alternation of the two would provide the first plan. This would result, not only in relief of interest for the audience, but in relief of work for the director. If he could select his long plays far enough in advance he would be rather free to adopt the most recent productions in the shorter forms. Then, too, if he knows how to organize and train assistants to whom directing may be delegated safely, he can concentrate on the productions requiring most attention, care, and time. With a conscientious corps of willing assistant directors he might be able to keep two programs under

rehearsal at the same time, devoting the major portion of his energies to drilling the actors in the long play. At the beginning of rehearsals of the one-act plays he should outline with as little possible chance for misunderstanding his methods and ideals. After that the entire process of blocking out the action, rehearsing the lines, building the interest should be carried out by the assistants. Before the dress rehearsal—as much before as possible—the director himself should assume charge. With his enthusiasm fresh and interest unspoiled by the routine of constant repetitions, he should be able to produce remarkable effects. As director and assistants work in this relation coöperative smoothness will develop constantly. Any member of an acting group knows how the appearance of a “polisher” or extra coach during the last rehearsals will induce a cast to “step-up”—if the cast has confidence in him, or if he can show the dramatic value of what he is trying to obtain and can induce them to follow the technique to secure just those results. Details of lacks which he can supply and defects which he can correct will be discussed in the chapter on rehearsing.

If it is not practicable to alternate performances of one-act with full-length plays, some fortunate combination may be built up from the demands and opportunities. Costume and fanciful plays often seem to answer exactly to the opportunity, but the season may be young, the returns purely speculative, the budget exigent; so that beautiful picturesqueness may have to be sacrificed to the cruel demands of common sense. There may be voiced the feeling that there have been enough old “classics” and “stand-



bys." But the best modern drama for contrast requires too high a royalty, or requires newly-built scenery. Perhaps, somewhere in foreign literature can be found a play answering to the needs of the audience and material equipment of the group, which has not been copyrighted in this country. Perhaps the variety can be found in some original production by a local playwright, although from the entering wedge of such a selection may come the widening crack which will finally, and that rather soon, split the organization. An entire season of nothing except original local typoscripts would prove to be a deadly bore for any persons except workshop supporters, all of whom aspire to be writers, actors, designers, producers; or unless the superlative excellence or daring originality of the plays attract a general public. Such a season, if one may judge from reports and opinions, depends for success and permanence upon purely local conditions. Many have been started; few have survived, unless combined in operation with some other principle of selection and arrangement.

## CHAPTER V

### REHEARSING THE PLAY

AFTER a play has been chosen for presentation, the next two important steps are to appoint a director or producer, and to select the cast. There are rumors of coöperative assemblies in which the ideal is that every one concerned shares equally in the responsibility, equally in the work, equally in the attainment, equally in the success. It is difficult to secure satisfying explanations of such endeavors. When an interested questioner asks for facts, he is answered with ideals. When he insists on results, he is offered prospectuses. When he attends performances, he is assured they are merely exercises. There is no doubt that coöperative effort can be utilized in dramatic production, but so far as I have observed a great deal of this so-termed dramatic activity turns out to be playground recreation, neighborhood pageantry, laboriously revived folk-dancing, spectacular drills and processions, juvenile shows, and miscellaneous improvisation, which while showing some elements utilized also in dramatic entertainment, has as little connection with the real art of the theater as has *Cleopatra's Night* in a three ring circus with the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes.

This is not, in any sense, to belittle the worthy endeavor of the wide-spreading community movement. To this

every element which can contribute should offer its hearty support. But there should be a distinction drawn between mere recreational pursuits and performed drama. Ballets are provided in old-fashioned opera, but no one would seriously claim that they constitute opera. Nor should any one confuse with play production a series of national dances, or a historical procession, delightful as active participation in these may be.

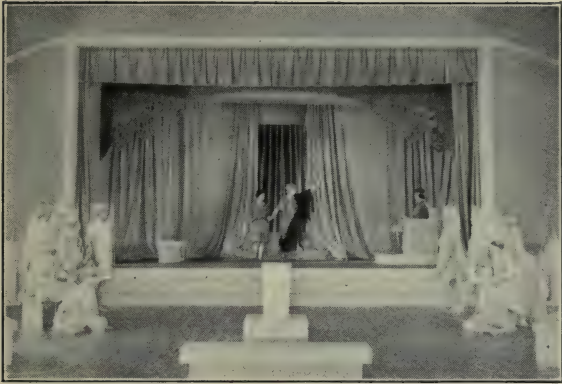
There are some attempts in certain amateur groups to try to dispose of a director. Armed with some high-sounding Utopian pronunciamento about the "democracy of the arts" they pretend to believe that a play should be the result of a voluntary coöperative association democratically working out its own destiny. You can find plans and arrangements for such ideal societies in many of the books dealing with dramatic activity. Investigation of the actual conditions lauded by these books will generally disclose the truth that the most pleasing and successful of these real democratic efforts are not dramatic in the strict sense, or that the apparently independent workers are in all the rehearsing and the producing quite as subservient to some directing mind as are the actors of a professional theater, or that the results of the system, while doubtlessly great fun and education for the performers, do not expeditiously or assuredly move into the production of plays. Enthusiasts are likely to confuse the intention with the result, the desire with the ability, the means with the end, the struggle with the victory. These attempts may be excellent training schools for later achievements, but it is as mistaken to term them successful because of that as it

would have been to insist *The Lodger* was a great play because it numbered in its cast two finished performers. There are reports of one acting society, at least, which actually tries to put such ideas into practice. These accounts declare that the performances of that group are the strangest and the funniest one can imagine, while the rehearsals are chaos. Good productions are the result of good directing. Efficient directing can make a success of probable failure. Misguided or ignorant directing can spoil an anticipated success.

A director's training begins long before he is given his first script to put upon the boards. He need not necessarily have graduated from either a school of acting or the professional stage. Many of the best directors in the country are indifferent or poor actors. The qualities of the two interests are entirely different. The actor is able to do certain things; the director is able to induce other people to do certain things. The latter must know first of all what is to be done; he must know secondly, just how it may be done; he must be able thirdly, to cause the actor under his charge to do that thing in exactly the proper manner and at the correct time.

Leaving aside the questions as to whether a director is better for knowing intimately the theater or for being verily free from any of its technical requirements, this much is as clear as day, that starting from beautiful ignorance, he will have to absorb and adopt through bitter experience a vast number of fundamentals if he ever hopes to produce with least effort for greatest success. This state-





Photographs by Alice Boughton

Bennett School Little Theater, Millbrook, under the direction of Charles Rann Kennedy.

Above: *Antigone*, by Sophocles.  
Below: Setting for *The Fool from the Hills*, by Charles Rann Kennedy.



Photographs by Eric Stahlberg

*The Merchant of Venice*, Smith College, Northampton.

ment of least effort means least effort for the performers, not himself only.

The simplest kind of illustration will suffice for this. Suppose an enthusiastic—but inexperienced—director is given a modern English comedy to produce. It looks easy—it is merely regular life transferred to a stage. He may decide that the first act should cover thirty minutes; but with no appreciation of the simple fact that amateurs can never deliver lines as rapidly and tellingly as professionals, he starts to rehearse the act as it was written. Early repetitions will always consume from twice to three times as long a period as the finished performance should, so counting on the speedy spurt of dress rehearsal he plods his lengthy way. Then as the date of presentation approaches he suddenly realizes that his first act is running to forty minutes. His cast has been rehearsed at their utmost rapidity; they can work no faster if they are to live through the entire evening. He may in his heart despise an audience which will not sit through his four hour performance, but some inklings of common sense tell him he cannot hold them until midnight, so he desperately begins to cut right and left. His actors cannot unlearn in a day the speeches they have been studying for weeks. They are not sure of cuts. Their confidence in him vanishes; their confidence in themselves oozes. Passages are deleted at final rehearsals, business is changed, the pace is forced, with the inevitable result that at the performance the “reproduction upon the stage of actual life” has become a breathless series of schoolroom recitations. The first act may go well, but the

latter scenes will suffer, for the untried amateurs will have exhausted most of their energy, and the play, instead of mounting in intensity will sink to a dull level, across which it will drag its weary length.

The thousand and one other little matters of acting effectively—call them tricks or technique or universal experience, as you please—which must be recognized by the director, such as turning, shifting the weight to start across stage in a graceful manner instead of suggesting a pair of scissors, the use of the hands, the much more difficult art of *not* using the feet, the knowledge of how to use one's height or how to counteract it, the principle of building suspense by quieting the voice and action, the powerful effect of pauses, the subdued reaction to emotions, rhythm, the unconsciousness of pure comedy, all these he may learn in time. But he is an infinitely better director if he begins with some appreciation of them and a humble desire to learn more, instead of sweeping them aside as beneath him or unessential.

A director must be sensitive to the changing psychology of the audiences. He must know of the decided change which has come over good acting during the past fifteen years. He will, if he really cares for his work, welcome the added difficulty of securing results with the modern moderate methods.

The producer's tangible work begins when the copy of the play is put into his hands. It should end when the curtain rises upon the first performance. This is the ideal term, though in long runs he may have to revise for weeks until the play is in perfect working order.



In certain things a director may be subject to the control of a committee, but in the actual development of the play from planning to performance he should be in absolute control. His word should be law. This does not mean that he will not be open to suggestion, that he will not listen to reason, that he may not be consulted, but it does mean that if the play is intrusted to him, the responsibility for its conduct must be his. It is merely fair, therefore, that all the opportunity should be his. Executive boards of acting societies, once they have appointed a director, should insist upon compliance with all his plans. Amateurs are likely to grow restive under supervision from one of their own members; so do professionals. As I write this, the call-board of one New York theater bears a notice to the company that all directions issued by the stage manager are to be obeyed as coming from the office. They are to be carried out, though complaints will be heard by the officials of the producing company. If persons whose profession is acting have to be reminded of such a matter is it any wonder that an amateur producer is the marked victim of intended murder by nearly every cast he directs? One of the proverbs of amateur acting is that the producer has no friends. Every man's hand is against him. Even the amateur authors whose plays he directs can tell you why their offspring were not instantly adopted by the public.

Equipped with an intimate knowledge of how effects are secured upon the stage, the producer studies the play to determine what effects it demands, and what are the best methods of securing them. In addition to his knowledge

of sound and legitimate methods of theatrical skill, he should have a freshness of attack and a novelty of treatment to infuse animation and enthusiasm into amateurs dealing with plays frequently novel and often even bizarre. The producer must serve as active interpreter between the page and the actors, and then between the actors and the audience. He must know the play better than any single performer. He must feel the play as any spectator may. He must bring the play from the dramatist to the audience by means of the cast upon the stage.

He must know the value of rhythm within the act as well as the progression of climactic interest throughout the entire development. He must be able to determine just what effects are to be secured and how to induce the individuals concerned to produce those effects. In all cases of several possible interpretations he must have history, tradition, common sense, superior impressiveness, consistency of character delineation, or quotable authority from the text of the play itself, to support his decisions.

The most frequently cited case of various possible deliveries of a short speech—all good as well as defensible—is the pair of words in *Macbeth*. Lady Macbeth is urging her husband to murder his king.

*Macbeth.* If we should fail—

*Lady Macbeth.* We fail!

But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we'll not fail.

How should "we fail" be delivered?

The Folio of 1623 prints a question mark after it. Mod-

ern editors are divided upon the punctuation, the inflection, the meaning. Mrs. Siddons is reported as having used successively three different intonations.

When Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* reads in the letter he has found, "If this fall into thy hand, revolve," does the last word mean "consider in thy mind," or "spin around upon your heels"? This latter is done by most actors in attempting to "fatten" an already rich rôle.

Modern dramatists are quite careful in indicating interpretations, but not always do they settle matters. In a rehearsal of *Don* by Rudolph Besier, a discussion arose as to just how the title character was to behave at a certain entrance. The text was scrutinized and finally this detail was seized upon. As he entered the room, though the situation was a strained one, he saluted his fiancée with the off-hand exclamation, "Hullo, Ann." That seemed to indicate that he had no appreciation of the terrible mess in which he had involved himself, while it did give a clue of detached nonchalance to his acting at that point.

The director must know the value of rhythm within the act as well as the progression of climactic interest throughout the entire development. In practically no scene does the mood, the feeling, the emotion remain unchanged for many consecutive minutes.

It will be easy to illustrate this from a single scene taken from *Twelfth Night*—the fifth act. Three different sets of characters give exhibitions of different kinds of foolery with the Clown. Then follows the Duke's indignant charge against Antonio for having been a pirate. This accusation the latter as sturdily repudiates, but before the matter can

be carried very far Olivia enters and to the absolute confusion of both Duke and Viola complains against the boy for breach of trust until the Duke, perceiving that his cruel fair dotes on his servant orders Cesario out to be slain. And then with the word "husband" Olivia throws the already complicated situation into confusion, for now Viola is amazed. Rage at the boy's duplicity sways the Duke when he hears the Priest's corroboration of Olivia's claim. Yet Shakespeare does not allow this strained and serious tenseness to continue long, for in the midst of it, in stumbles Sir Andrew Aguecheek with a broken head, accusing the puzzled young Cesario of having beaten him. This effect is emphasized immediately by the appearance of Sir Toby, also roundly charging the youngster. But before any of the characters on the stage or any spectator in the audience can recover from such a breathless procession of events, on hastens Sebastian with an apology directed at the loving but hesitating Olivia. Before these two lovers can adjust their interrupted relations, Viola must be satisfied concerning Sebastian. In the twinkling of an eye the interest has swung back to Viola's love for the Duke, yet only three speeches are allowed to it, when mention is made of Malvolio, who is produced. In the modern versions there is always aroused for the misused steward some sentiment because the male star plays that rôle, but that sympathy passes as he leaves, and the taunts of the Clown make us smile again. The closing speech of the Duke brings back a little magnanimity, and the Clown's song ends the comedy.

All these moods occur within the short time of a short



act. The audience is never allowed or required to exercise any one feeling or emotion for more than a very few minutes.

To be impressed with this same principle in compressed form analyze for emotion alone *Suppressed Desires* by Susan Glaspell, or *In the Zone* by Eugene O'Neill, or *A Night at an Inn* by Lord Dunsany. For effective movement from one mood to another Ibsen's plays provide excellent examples of graduated change. Used in connection with surprise and contrast, this device is one of the most powerful of all dramatic elements.

Rhythmic shading from one mood to another is an essential in good producing.

When the cast becomes proficient in lines and action a director may direct them much as a conductor leads his orchestra. While the scene is being enacted he may give—without interrupting—such directions as “faster,” “slower,” “louder,” “pause,” “step nearer,” “fall back,” “stronger,” “build,” “hold it.” Such directing comes later in rehearsing, when polishing the play, or adding the shaded finishing touches, but every one of these orders should be anticipated by the director, and held in his mind as necessary in the final performance. As many amateurs ignorantly believe they are ready for the audience as soon as they can romp through the lines without prompting, a good director should be able to prove to them how much more they need to add to mere memorization and crude interpretation before they can consider themselves acting at all.

In anticipating these perfecting details directors may

attain their end in two different ways. Some decide upon every minutest point and never swerve from a first pronouncement. These rest on firm adherence to first choices and decisions. Others decide the broader lines only, adding to the main threads the smaller points. Perhaps the best results—for amateurs, at least—depend upon a compromise between the two, or a combination of them. A wise director may go so far as to tell his cast, "If I ask you to do something a certain way, please don't tell me I asked you to do it differently at previous rehearsals. I may be trying various things at nearly all the repetitions, for I want to find the best." The cast must not believe that this proves lack of comprehension or ability on his part, provided any change seems to improve the effect. If he merely wastes time and effort in needless vacillation, he had better not be entrusted with a script to direct.

As far as is possible the scenery designs should follow the author's descriptions and stipulations. Changes may be made, depending upon economy, space, equipment, provided no essential requirement of the acting has to be modified or deleted.

So much of the producer's work is preparatory. He has been considering merely the text of the play and its material surroundings. Next he must turn his attention to its human characters.

The cast, then, is next to be determined. There are many methods of securing good casts. One of the quickest and most simple is to appoint the members. A committee may do this, and hand the list to the director, or the director himself may choose the actors. Such a scheme saves an

incalculable amount of time. Another advantage is that it places the responsibility upon certain definite individuals. This will make the members of the casting committee and the director careful of the selections, in order to assure a good production. When a committee makes the selections the personal judgment of one person is modified by comment from others. It also results in dividing the responsibility. Undoubtedly the best method of selecting casts is by "try-outs."

In trying out candidates a producer or a committee passes upon the fitness of each one by seeing him act. The candidate may offer a portion of the play to be cast, or something else acceptable. He may deliver lines from the play to be acted. He may take part in a "cast reading" in which persons stand about the stage or room and read the lines of characters in the play. If there are three or four applicants for one part, each is given a chance to act some scene. In judging such an exhibition less attention should be paid to what he *does* than what he indicates he *can do*. Performers must always be chosen because of the possible development of their latent abilities rather than for assured attainments. Iden Payne chose a cast of twenty men and women from hearing a large number read the prologue to *The Drawing of the Sword* by Thomas W. Stevens. Some were selected because of their bearing, looks, manner, voice, size. What they demonstrated they *could do* was more significant than what they *did*. Every professional is being tried out every time he appears upon the stage.

It is reported that when an impersonator of Lincoln was

needed for John Drinkwater's play, some one suggested a Mr. McGlynn. He was summoned back to New York from a road company. The author and he went through the scene in Grant's headquarters in which the President pardons the boy sentenced to be shot for sleeping on sentry duty. At the end of that try-out, Mr. McGlynn was engaged for the title rôle.

There are only two drawbacks to this scheme which is the fairest which can be devised for amateurs. It consumes a great deal of time. The other drawback is this. Some member of the organization best fitted to play a rôle may not feel disposed to try for it. Manifestly he should be the one selected. But it appears unfair to disregard the three or four who have made the effort while he has done nothing. Yet every rôle should be acted in the very best manner. For the play's sake, the best actor should be assigned the part. A candidate may try for a part for which he is not at all suited while he could fill another rôle better than any one who strives to get it. It frequently occurs, therefore, that the showing of candidates in a series of try-outs must be supplemented and corrected by personal choices.

This point of selecting the cast is emphasized here because in amateur plays there are likely to be so many instances of miscasting. More emphasis is offered by the indisputable fact that if a play is well cast its success is assured, always presupposing, naturally, that the method of directing will not ruin it. The ever-present dangers of casting amateur plays must be anticipated from the inception of the process. Friendship, social prestige, prejudice,



previous appearances, willingness to act, desire to shine, all these must be reckoned with at this point. In his consideration the director must reduce them to the minimum, and seek for mobility, dependableness, patience, intelligence, stage presence, common sense, obedience, fitness, loyalty, and endurance. If he is wise he will banish temperament unless it is over-shadowed by matchless ability.

Every member of the cast should read the entire play in the form it is decided to use. Any cuts should be made before certain lines and scenes enter into the performers' consciousness. This is essential for amateurs. Some apparently chance remark in an early conversation may determine the delineation of a character, or indicate the interpretation of an entire later scene. Producers, of course, should be able to collect all these points and transmit them to the actors through directions; but the actors should be given the opportunity to accumulate them for themselves. At the first meeting the play should be read by the cast. General directions should be noted upon the copies. The main points to strive for in the scenes, situations, lines might be briefly indicated, more as guides in study than as acting hints. Matters of age, peculiar characteristics, lines of comedy, pauses, high lights, should be informally discussed.

The rule just given regarding the complete play is by all means the best for amateurs. Even to study a rôle the complete version seems the best, yet individuals have their peculiar preferences. Many study best by copying their parts, using personal contractions and abbreviations. Others prefer to recite the lines aloud exactly as they will speak

them. Nearly every amateur tests himself by having some one hear him recite lines, the second person giving the regular speeches of other characters. This device is the best of all, as it accustoms the ear to the length and sound of the delivered dialogue, and makes the actor feel sure in his responses. It unquestionably, in the long run, saves time and energy.

There are some amateurs, perhaps with a slight professional experience, and many semi-professionals, who prefer to study from a professionally typed "part." This contains only the lines of the single rôle, with the last few words of other characters' speeches—just enough to give the cue. The advantage of this for studying is merely that it contains no more than the part to study. The actor does not have to skip about the complete play picking out his own speeches. In the second place it gives the learner an exact idea of how long his rôle is, for from the number of small sheets he knows how many "sides" (as they are termed professionally) he has to master.

As amateurs are forced to study their rôles at odd times, they should soon know the easiest and surest method to use. People's minds memorize by quite different processes, so each performer must learn for himself the workings of his own faculty for memorization.

One stock actress explained her system to me. With a knowledge of the entire play, she divided her scenes into so many situations or moments. Each one of these had some kernel, some essence, some point, some crisis, some truth to drive home. Around such central themes which themselves would suggest what she termed "key words"

or "key lines," she would group other important words, phrases, and speeches. Thus by a method of memorized association she had a succession of important facts and connected speeches to remember. As she concentrated upon these and went over and over them they became indelibly fixed in her mind. If she missed a word at times she still knew the effect she was working up, and this by association would direct the words into the channels associated by repetition with that effect.

By such a method another result was secured—a result of prime importance for amateurs to notice. So frequently an audience is cognizant that as the play progresses the characters are less and less certain of their lines. This is naturally the product of our old-fashioned, usual system of memorizing. Recall how you yourself memorize a poem of six stanzas, and admit that you are always likely to go to pieces in the last stanza if you try to repeat it aloud. What is the reason? This is it in a single sentence. In memorizing you repeated the first stanza six times as often as you did the last, the second five times, and so down, until a single repetition of the concluding stanza deluded you into believing that you *knew* it.

The system of memorizing outlined here has this decided advantage;—that all portions of the play are memorized equally well, and at the same rate. When, after several repetitions, the speeches approach perfection, they all advance to the same degree. If perfection is reached for any one section it marks accurate memorization of the entire rôle.

At the first real rehearsal it might be a good thing if

every performer could be letter-perfect. This is an ideal condition never realized by any actors. It is not really so necessary, for at this first rehearsal the cast should merely walk through their parts, getting ideas of how and when to enter and exit; how and when to move about; what changes of feeling to indicate; all of which they should carefully write down upon their copies. Then when they memorize they can pick up all this stage business in connection with the lines they speak. Thus the action and the delivered word are suited to each other as they should be. This, you recall, was one of Shakespeare's cardinal points of good acting.

During first rehearsals the director should interrupt frequently. It is less difficult to correct an unfit action before it becomes spontaneously reflex than after. It is easier, then, though difficult at any time, to change a wrong or misplaced emphasis. In early rehearsals the most insistent care should be given to pronunciation, enunciation, and tone. Every person engaged in the delivery of speech should help to cast off the harshness and the rasping utterance which mark the so-called American voice. Our speech can be made beautiful upon the stage. In the hurry of most amateur productions these elements of beauty and effectiveness receive scant attention. This does not mean that all the members of a cast should fall into the other fault of talking exactly alike. A careful director will prevent this, though many play directors seem to induce casts to imitate them. In early rehearsals it is easier to get clear ideas of situations. At such times when differences of opinion arise between director and actor, the latter may be allowed to ex-



press his conception, but in the end he must follow the director's decision. The latter may be able to explain very clearly why he asks for action done his way rather than another. If he is a thinking producer he will be able to show why his interpretation is correct. If he merely "feels" that it should be so, he should examine and analyze to assure himself.

The producer should know how to emphasize effects—notice, emphasize, not exaggerate. Moderation, not exaggeration, is the acme of present-day acting, in large professional companies as well as in intimate little theaters. Here are concrete illustrations of the principle underlying this theme. In *The Angel Intrudes* by Floyd Dell a young woman about to elope with a young poet really goes off with his guardian angel who has intruded to save him from this rash exploit. This scene could be played to show that the Angel makes every effort he can to win the girl. But it is more humorous—as well as carrying out the announced disposition of the girl—to have her rapidly transfer her affection from her earthly lover, and leave his apartment to go willingly with this fascinating visitor from Heaven. Their departure can point this or neutralize it. The Angel opens the door while she is on the opposite side of the room. Should he then go across to her, and lead her out as an ordinary lover would? Or should he wait at the door and let her cross to join him before they go out together? The second is so much more in the spirit of the play that some would call it almost self-evident.

At the end of the second act of *Don* by Rudolph Besier

news is brought into the drawing-room of an English canon's home that the husband of the woman taken away the night before by the son of the clergyman has just reached the house and is being ushered into the study. Don, the son, declares he will go face the husband. As there are reasons for fearing that the man has come for revenge, and may shoot, the household tries to restrain the boy. Suddenly the maid and the boy's father appear. To indicate the general confusion they should leave the room door open. When the father has ordered his son not to leave that room, the canon goes out. By so simple an action as closing that open door, as if to shut his son in, the entire point of the situation should be emphasized.

Amateurs are likely to be over-anxious to act in telling scenes. It is difficult to make them realize that emphasis may come from absolute quiescence. Pauses are more eloquent than speech. Good directing must take note of chances for such underlining. A young actress was to faint in a play. She did this and the subsequent recovery very convincingly, but she continually bothered the director by asking for directions about what she should do. It took patient reiteration of detailed explanations to make her realize that she must not do anything. She could not seem to comprehend the point which could and should be made by her relaxed passivity. This instance illustrates another prime difficulty of amateur plays. Untrained, unskilled performers find it almost impossible to act when they are not saying something, or when they are not in the stage center. They allow themselves to pass out of the situation.

As rehearsals progress there should be fewer and fewer interruptions. Changes should be announced before the action begins, or at the end of a scene. If possible, these alterations should be incorporated immediately by repetitions. Many amateurs need time to absorb changes. In this instance the modifications should become effective at the next rehearsal.

One-act plays should be rehearsed entire. Performers should feel the rise of interest and know how to secure it. The danger of repeating until the acting becomes a bore should be anticipated and avoided. Actors are as likely to "grow stale" as athletes are. Continually drumming at an effect may be the very worst method in the world for securing it. Many people under such treatment are like teased animals. Like spirited horses they may be goaded too far. I have seen an entire cast in a serious play go off on a tangent, become almost hysterical, and rehearse as howling farce with peals of laughter the most affecting scenes, then reappear at a next rehearsal and go through the scene with remarkable improvement. Severity is out of place in such ebullitions of group temperament. A wise director will doff his dignity and enter into the fun for this one occasion.

Ability to work with human natures in the artificial relationships of play casts is usually of more practical value to a director than mastery of stagecraft. Stagecraft without it will carry him nowhere. Much skill in handling people coupled with fair stage knowledge will work wonders. Frequent, rather than long, rehearsals should be the rule. Familiarity and ability should reach the point



where no effect is the result of a lucky chance or fortunate circumstance. Anything which merely "happens" is not good acting. Any effect should be an assured certainty from habitual effort.

Full-length plays require different treatment by amateurs. Acts should be rehearsed separately. The first act will require the longest time, because in addition to memorizing lines and working up business, the actors are endeavoring to take on the characters of other persons. The school boy acting Monsieur Jourdain is learning how to be the silly worshiper of rank. The girl studying Maurya in *Riders to the Sea* is visualizing an Irish mother such as she never saw. Girls in a Greek play are trying to walk gracefully without heels. The two Dromios in *A Comedy of Errors* are practising grimaces. When the first act is ready, the actors will have mastered the characterization, so that task diminishes as the rehearsals proceed.

Every act has its peculiar problems and important requirements. The first act must arouse the interest of the audience. It must impress them as soon as possible. The first lines to be spoken are extremely important and correspondingly difficult. Modern play-writing has almost entirely eliminated the first speech by providing that the curtain shall rise upon an empty stage, upon action without lines, or upon a stage picture which will carry over some impression before any character need speak a word. If the play does not offer such a quiet start, the director may contrive it. The director should make plain to speakers just where the first laugh may be expected, just where the first telling impression should be made. In these days



of moderate, realistic acting, amateurs are finding it more and more difficult to secure their effects. This entails all the more careful preparation in acting.

Middle acts must be rehearsed to rise above the first. The supreme importance of the middle of a play is exemplified by the title of Mr. Hopkins's book, *How's Your Second Act?* Intensity and complication must be reflected in rehearsals. There must be a series of "step-ups." Intervals of contrast must not allow the audience to slip away.

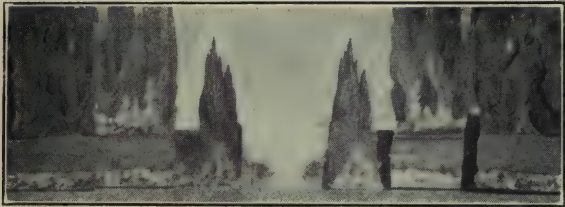
As a play is a series of crises it must be rehearsed as a succession of wave motions—if the figure of speech be permitted. Tempo, motion, emotion, stress, strain, rise, height, culmination, subsidence, relief, contrast, cadence, all these must be recognized and secured. A play is of course, a unified entity, but when analyzed it will present a series of diversified links in a chain of related circumstances. A director must strive during rehearsals to attain these effects, which the audience may not be able to explain in detail, but which an audience reacts to as surely as piano strings respond to the touch upon the keys. In printing our plays in English we do not indicate such progressions beyond inserting more or less adequate stage directions. The Latin nations have until recently, when the practice seems to be less consistently followed, indicated as a separate "scene" each division within which no entrances or exits are made. To a reader this system of printing the acts upon the page is needlessly confusing. It is much plainer to clearly provide entrance and exit directions. But it does visualize the unity of a situation, the complete-

ness of a scene. And it does help directors and performers to raise the level, or build a climax, or emphasize a contrast, or sink to ordinary conversation, or relieve pathos by comedy; or make prominent some of the other reactions necessary to keep a play going. For without these rises and subsidences, the drama stands still.

During rehearsals when actors are not likely to be disturbed by it, the director should direct as the conductor of an orchestra leads the rendition of a composition. As the characters go through their parts he should give directions continually as needed, warning a speaker to slow down, urging another to warm up to passion; urging one to intensity; leading another into evenness and deliberation. He can thus accelerate or retard the tempo. He can whip up to a fury of sudden explosion. He can quickly reduce to ordinary realism. He can make a pause pregnant with mystery. He can coax adoration into the pose and tone of an awkward lover. He can stir a quiet winsomeness into stinging rebuke. He can make tangible to his group those seemingly delicate and unreal elements of rhythm and reaction.

When he can make all these things inherent and consistent parts of his repetitions he has brought his rehearsals to the point for the shading. Then—as he himself is sensitively attuned to the author's purposes—he can add or reduce until there becomes apparent that exquisite correspondence of interpretation to intention which is the end of all true art.

Often not enough cuts are made to bring the play within the ability of amateurs. For all other dicta to the con-



Models of scenery for Central High School stage,  
Saint Louis.

The upper was used in *Twelfth Night* and *Love's  
Labor Lost*. The lower in *Twelfth Night* and  
*The Comedy of Errors*.



Wells College. All-girl casts.

Above: *Bushido*, by Takeda Izuma.

Below: *Le Malade Imaginaire*, by Molière.



trary notwithstanding, plays must be cut for amateurs, even as they are for professionals. The changes and adaptations made in producing plays are beyond enumeration. Sir James M. Barrie, interrogated about the excellent last line spoken in *What Every Woman Knows*, which does not appear in the printed play, frankly admitted that he had forgotten the "funny" line delivered on the stage. "I probably put it in at rehearsal and it has gone legging away on its own." Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon* had entire scenes cut when it was put upon the stage.

School and college instructors hold up a warning hand, declaring that the text of Shakespeare is sacred, that not a single line must be excised. Yet we seem to have his own practice for the cuts necessary for modern conditions. The Quartos of *King Lear* are about 175 lines longer than the Folio of 1623. Some 220 lines not in the Folio are in the Quartos. The Folio contains 50 lines not in the Quartos. The Folio omits one entire scene found in the Quartos. In this connection an interested student will find the remarks on the various Quartos of *The Merchant of Venice* printed in the Variorum Edition by Furness especially interesting and illuminating.

It is in concluding acts that amateurs usually fail. They have not the endurance to carry a long play easily. They may not be conscious of it, but they have used up most of their energy. Try as they will, the last act lacks freshness and vigor. So they must be rehearsed for endurance. Before the last act is reached they have also used up their supply of acting devices, so that there is the

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suggestion of monotony in their presentations. This accounts in part for the general "let-down." To counteract this some justifiable devices or stage tricks are in many instances resorted to. Changes of costume or setting may help interest the audience and so relieve the strain upon the cast. Attention may be diverted to extraneous features until the actors can assume the burden of responsibility and successfully bear it to a satisfying conclusion. Modern stagecraft with its interest in lighting, color, decoration, here finds opportunity for its support to the acting. I am not attempting to justify every resort to such measures. I am merely pointing out a fact which must be reckoned with in attempts to improve the level of amateur productions. Such devices are reprehensible only when they submerge the effect of the play as drama. If they enforce the dramatic value they are within the director's province.

To correct further the usual commonplaceness of the latter part of a play, the last act should be rehearsed longer and more carefully than is usually done. Many directors start rehearsing it too close to the performance. It therefore does not move as certainly as it should. Yet, as it is the most significant part of the play, it should be the best acted.

A good director should have numerous devices for helping rehearsals. Groups and combinations should be planned so that minor characters are not kept waiting about with nothing to do except to disturb by chattering and giggling. Self-conscious performers should be rehearsed privately in love passages, comic scenes, and tense situations, until

they are good enough to impress the other members of the cast.

The play should be ready in every acting detail at least a week before the scheduled performance. This is an all-important matter. During those last days the producer should be free to give time and attention to costumes, make-up, scenery, lighting, properties, and the thousand and one details which make play-producing the most vexatious as well as the most fascinating undertaking in the world.

## CHAPTER VI

### ARTISTIC AMATEUR SETTINGS

It is perfectly possible—as some amateur enthusiasts assert—to present plays without any scenery. Several years ago almost a dozen directors advertised performances of Shakespeare, emphasizing as a decided feature that the productions were in “the Elizabethan manner.” This usually meant without scenery. So far as it involved a stage almost entirely free from built sets, the manner was Elizabethan. The great difficulty today is that no one can say with certainty exactly what the method of presentation was in Shakespeare’s time. It is incredible that at the time Inigo Jones, court painter and architect, was devising and constructing the elaborate mechanical and picturesque settings demanded by the masques of Ben Jonson, the professional playhouse—always quick to adopt court manners and interests—did not follow as close as its financial resources would allow. Sketches and descriptions of court entertainments prove that elaborate equipment and scenery were employed. The stage after 1603 must have reflected this great advance in stage decoration.

Most modern attempts to interest theater-goers in these self-denominated antiquarian revivals always overlook this possibility of late Shakespearean settings. A mistake more serious than their attempt to cover poor acting and amateurish characterization by bare scaffolding is their dis-



regard of the cardinal fact of Elizabethan professional stage record—a single fact which removes forever any wide appeal of an accurate repetition. The women's rôles were enacted by boys.

In colleges—whether in fairly serious drama or howling musical comedy—we may look upon raw youth disporting itself in feminine lingerie, and if it doesn't have to speak too many lines, and if it remembers to take short steps in walking, and not to pull its skirt up when it sits, we may at times drop into a voluntary illusion. But a restoration of Elizabethan casting to a beautifully poetic play of Shakespeare's is horrible even to discuss.

A compromise setting may be made quite beautiful, even when reduced to such simplicity and exercised with such flexibility as the settings shown many years back by the New Theater of New York, and more recently by Walter Hampden, E. H. Sothorn, and Alfred Hopkins. When reduced to their simplest equipment, old plays need draped stages.

Modern plays may be presented with not even that much decoration. For certain dramas the end of a room which is large enough to accommodate the audience will serve admirably. If the actors can be plainly seen, not even a platform is needed. In many large houses three or four plays have been offered in a single evening with entirely different sets. This has been managed by having the spectators pick up their chairs and move from the bare billiard room after seeing *Augustus Does His Bit* by G. Bernard Shaw to the large hallway to watch a short play such as *Fancy Free* by Stanley Houghton presented on the stair

landing, then to the conservatory to see, perhaps, Sutro's *A Marriage Has Been Arranged*. M. Maeterlinck had his *Pelléas and Mélisande* so produced in the old buildings of St. Wandrille, his home in France. But a series of such peripatetic productions would cease to be a novelty and become a bore. Also, a large number of most attractive plays and effects are barred entirely by such methods.

The natural beauty of outdoors will frame a host of other plays more adequately. Volumes of them have been written, although more recently the more practicable and sensible form of spectacular pageantry has almost usurped the earlier popularity of *al fresco* performances. Such surroundings determine the material of the play. They preclude delicate effects, precise shadings. They preclude stories turning upon or developed by involved dialogue, or nice points of characterization. The more action depends upon broad movements, the more nearly the theme permits of pantomimic interpretation, the better for both performers and audience. Add to these drawbacks of outdoor acting the always impending inclemency of American weather, the summer open-air noises, the behavior of an outdoor crowd, and you will gain an adequate idea of all the elements to be considered in undertaking such risks. Also keep clearly in mind the difference between plays on one side and processions, pageantry, masques, spectacles, and such related entertainments, on the other.

With all disadvantages counted at their true cost, there are always recompensing delights about open-air productions.

The mere terms "play" and "production" connote at least a stage of some size and scenery of some sort.

So far as scenery is concerned the best starting point entails only four elements—the producer who knows exactly how he wants the play to be set, enough space to erect a good set, artistic ability to create the design or model, and enough material means to complete it.

Material means does not signify money only. It includes scenery already built, paints, lumber, canvas, blocks, draperies, rugs and carpets, and the thousand and one things which accumulate in theaters and houses. In daring exhibitions of artistic ability in stage settings, amateurs far outstep professionals, who just now are adopting devices heralded ten years ago by enthusiastic amateur art directors. The most crying need of all amateur stages is space—space to the right, space to the left, space to the rear, and space overhead. Every producer must know exactly how he wants every play set, for every play presents problems of its own. The same kind of settings through an entire season would result in that reducer of the size of all audiences—monotony.

Never—if you can prevent it—allow any stage which you control to be loaded with the four conventional sets produced by professional scene builders acting on their own initiative to provide your theater with equipment suggesting the country town's "op'ry house." These regular stock pieces include always a nondescript woodland, a park with a struggling putty group painted on the back drop, a "drawing-room" with a wide archway, two doors,

but never any windows, and fourth, usually painted on the rear side of the preceding, a kitchen. There is no denying that these sets may be needed at some time. But if you are connected with a school, college, club, or community center, block every attempt to get this "stock" when the building is completed. Have the money put into income-bearing securities which can be promptly converted into cash to buy scenery as occasion requires. Or take part of it and drape the entire stage with beautifully colored curtains which will serve as attractive backgrounds for lecturers, musicians, dancers, yes—and many plays as well.

Do not be led by over-enthusiastic praise in books into fixing upon your stage those devices, which though excellent for houses needing them, may be merely extravagant white elephants for you. I have been told that the revolving stage in the Little Theater of New York was before the most recent alterations used mainly to convey furniture from the front to the rear at a speed easily equaled by the usual manner of handling, yet you will find scores of books and magazine articles glibly talking about the value of such a modern appliance. Very little is said of the mechanical structural aspect, or of the expense in supplying power to operate such devices. Do not have a permanent plaster cyclorama built until you have carefully considered all its possible interference with tackle for borders, border lights, ceilings, foliage, etc. For the number of times you are going to need it, consider whether a canvas drop will not do as well. In other words, keep your stage space as free as possible from all permanent encumbrances.

A draped stage will serve for hundreds of plays. If the



hangings will take tints in lighting, almost any effect can be secured. Furniture, decorations, hangings, costumes, will fix the period and kind of place being represented. Curtains permit entrances at all points. If many sets are hung upon wires they should be arranged to move easily for quick changes. The business manager of the Benson Company of Stratford-on-Avon in 1914 discussed with me the production of *The Merchant of Venice* entirely before draperies. Some such device was used in part in the production of this play in London, with the New York actor, Maurice Moscovitch, as Shylock. In the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-on-Avon, in 1920 many quick changes of scenes were made by drawing curtains and tapestries strung upon wires.

Plainly colored curtains hanging clear of the floor in vertical folds may serve as modern drawing-rooms or sets for costume plays. Suggestions of decorations will give almost endless variety. A landscape broadly painted, with knightly figures in it, may serve as tapestries for either modern rooms or medieval chambers. If Shakespearean producers years ago had known a little more about historical accuracy and beauty of effects, even *Hamlet* and *Lear* could have been decorated more effectively and economically. Instead of displaying crudely painted stone walls, any bare framework might have been hung with genuine curtains in modern imitation of the medieval arras. Not only would this have been more beautiful but it would have allowed more rapid change of setting. In one scene in *Hamlet* it would have permitted a vivid reproduction of what Shakespeare intended, instead of a mawkish make-

shift. In the closet scene Polonius should hide behind the arras, always hung a foot or more away from the damp stone walls, instead of stealing off into an alcove or doorway.

Practically any play of the past may be set within curtained spaces, while not a few more modern ones—not demanding too finished realism—can be thus set much more beautifully than by means of the usual old-fashioned interior flats. Every school which has been wondering whether it had better repaint its interior set, or have a new one built, can spend the money to better advantage in draperies. Tapestries will set nearly all French plays and many English ones as well. For any Molière interior you need merely cover your canvas walls with hangings. A few hangings flanking a monumental fire-place will carry you back to any indeterminate or definite period particularized by the furniture, the costumes, and the dialogue of the characters. Even Italy may be thus simulated.

The orient may be brought upon a large stage by draping most of it in black and gold, then showing through tall, straight openings, towers, peaks, domes, and minarets against the brilliant blue back-drop, or against the purple of night. There is absolutely no limit to the use, effectiveness, and beauty of draperies upon both large and small stages.

If you can purchase only one set of hangings you must be careful of the color. No general rules for choice can be given, as so much depends upon the frame of your stage pictures; upon the color scheme of the auditorium walls, seats, ceiling; upon your lighting equipment; upon the fre-

quency of its use. Expert advice upon the spot is worth a score of haphazard opinions at long range. Browns, grays, blues, are more likely to prove satisfactory than any others. Beware of decoration or ornamentation such as gilt borders, clusters of fruit, metallic lines, corner pieces, conventionalized designs, period applications, art nouveau, symbols, faddist propaganda. Try to put repose, charm, distinction into your backgrounds. Let everything else be added as individual plays require.

For period, poetic, romantic plays, draperies serve admirably. Difficulty arises as soon as modern, realistic material requires dressing. Windows and doors—at least modern ones—do not seem congruous in such unusual surroundings. Though enthusiasts may declaim, it is impossible to produce without realistic scenery such plays as *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell, *Riders to the Sea* of J. M. Synge, *In the Zone* by Eugene O'Neill, *The Cat and the Cherub* by F. C. Fernald, *You Never Can Tell* by G. Bernard Shaw, the first act of *Doctor in Spite of Himself* by Molière. So the producer and his art staff will have to turn to built scenery.

A built interior can be made just as beautiful as a curtained or tapestried one. ~~If you have money~~ build each interior as you need it, and make it exactly right for its purpose. If you are not affluent, do not be too pronounced in colors, style, architectural detail, and ornament. Let the built scenery merely suggest possible kinds of walls. Let your treatment by rugs, furniture, pictures, hangings, do all the rest. Build your sets always so that they may be used again and again, even without repainting. Producers who

use and recommend screens for scenery will enforce this advice. Remember that rearrangement of pieces will produce new sets.

Your art staff must know much of the practical construction of stage scenery. The first principle is that all scenery should be so constructed that it can be worked from the stage floor. Pieces which have upon their edges two halves of hinges which are to fit together and can be fastened by having a long wire nail pushed through the parts may be practicable, provided the highest hinge can be reached from the stage. If a ladder or box or chair is needed, that scenery is badly constructed. Any pieces taller than ten or eleven feet will likely not fit closely together at the top if this kind of fastening is used.

Some amateurs provide grooves on the floor and ceiling. Into these grooves are fitted or slid the pieces of scenery until they meet edge to edge. In successful result such scenes should give an impression of well-constructed solidity. If edges are straight and junctures are at exact right angles there should be no yawning gaps in the meeting lines. But this is a poor method because it makes all stage spaces the same size. All rooms and open spaces have to be the same distance to the rear, and right and left. The slope of side walls has to be calculated beforehand and all interiors shaped exactly alike. Practically no alcoves, corners, arches, can be set without pulling up and renailing the grooves. Exteriors are especially ungainly in this make-shift. Wood wings or tree side-pieces usually look best if they almost parallel the footlights. As grooves for these nailed to the stage floor at each side would project





*The Shepherd in the Distance*, by Holland Hudson.

Above: The Little Theater, Denver.  
Below: Smith College, Northampton.



Scenery designs by C. Raymond Jonson

Above: *The Pretty Sabine Women*, by L. Andreev.

Below: *The Maker of Dreams*, by Oliphant Down.  
Walls, flat gray, rather dark. Furniture, lighter gray. The room is seen through the large window fitted into the proscenium. One character entered from the audience, pretending to raise the sash.

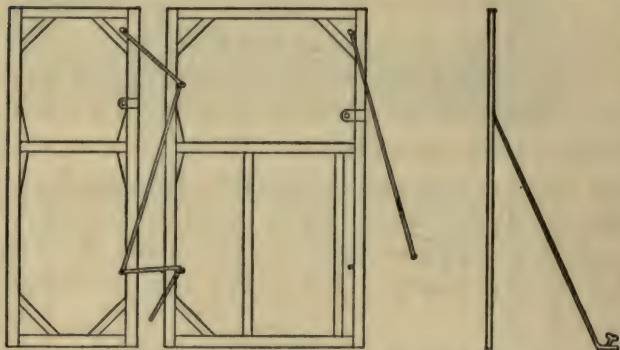
into any room which might be set during the same bill, and as these grooves parallel to the stage front would have to cross, intersect, or interfere with the grooves for side walls, there would be endless toil and trouble.

There seems really not a single thing to be said in favor of such a hardened stage manipulation. It harks back to the days before the eighties when grooves above the stage were provided to support scenery. Those methods are antiquated. Only ignorance of real stage methods can be the reasons for the retention of any such outworn device. When a groove has no scenery fitted into it, it is a certain stumbling block for performers. The entire floor of the stage from one side wall to the other and from the footlights clear to the rear wall should be absolutely level. Not the slightest projection should mar its surface. Even electric light plugs should be sunk beneath little covering trapdoors or plates.

If ceiling and stage are not exactly parallel as is more than likely true in schools, churches, halls, converted theaters, etc., there are troubles in fitting. This scheme seems totally bad.

Another device if the stage is so small that scenery is not too far from the walls of the building is to have screw-eyes in the scenery frames. Between these and other screw-eyes along the walls at the same height are placed strips of wood with projecting nails at the ends. These are not too high to be reached easily but are high enough to allow unrestricted passage of persons under them. As the sides of sets always slope and the building walls are straight, the length for every point must be accurately calculated.

Unless carefully placed, these projecting screw-eyes will push holes through canvas when the flats are stacked. Although once used at the Provincetown Theater, this method seems cumbersome compared with the best one. Pieces of interior scenery (flats) should be laced together with a rope which should be fastened to the right side near the



Rear of scenery showing method of lacing and bracing.

top of every piece of interior scenery made. Every left edge should have below this point a cleat or nail behind which the rope is caught. About a yard from the bottom of the scenery are two long nails parallel with the canvas, around which the line can be fastened. A person can do this without even stooping. If the set be quite tall the lacing may pass across more times than this.

When a box set of this kind is put up, its angles will make it stand. Large sets can be made more stable by inserting alcoves, or by cutting off corners at sloping angles, or by providing for a projection into the end or middle



of a wall. More stability is secured by using regular stage braces at various points. These are adjustable supports with at one end a hook which catches a hole in a cleat fastened to the frame about eight or nine feet from the bottom, and at the other a large flat eye through which a stage-screw is put into the floor. Not many—perhaps none—are required for small box sets, for they will stand by themselves. If there are reasons why the stage should not be marked by the holes made by the stage-screws it is easy to nail down at certain points with long thin wire nails, a few blocks of soft wood about two inches thick. In these the screws can be fastened. One screw will hold two or more braces. When the block of wood is removed at the end of the performance no marks remain except the small holes made by the few nails. Braces help in rapid changes, for the stage is really set and the acting may begin before all the braces are in place.

In some arrangements, instead of using the stage-screw through the metal foot of the brace, a heavy weight is placed upon it. While practicable for light pieces, or those needed for only a short time, this weight is not so secure as the screw. A director can frequently make use of sand bags to anchor braces.

In order to facilitate changes on the professional stage there has recently come into use a device which will be a great boon to little theaters in making changes—if they ever have the stage space to accommodate it, and the money to carry it out adequately—both conditions doubtful of realization. Low platforms upon rollers or small wheels are constructed. If the space required for acting is quite

small, one such platform is sufficient. In other cases several must be provided which when fitted together cover the floor space of the stage opening. Upon these platforms are erected the pieces of scenery, which then remain upon them. The scenes are "struck" or taken apart only as necessity requires. All of the scenery which can be kept intact and all properties and furniture remain upon the small platform which is rolled off to one side out of the way.

A large amount of off-stage space is needed for such arrangements. I was told that in *The Masquerader* clearance between platforms in many of the changes was only about an inch. This device made possible the changes in *Eyes of Youth* and *A Voice in the Dark*. It was also used, without the same necessity of rapid change, in *Keep Her Smiling* and *Tea for Three*.

As these platforms raise the scene floor above the regular stage level, an inclined section has to be permanently installed across the front of the stage, sloping up from immediately behind the footlights to behind the curtain line. The moveable platforms are pushed tight up against its rear, so that no rough edges are perceptible.

While this device would solve the ever-annoying one of stage waits and clumsy scene shifting on amateur stages, there is little chance of its being used widely because it demands space and money. And these two things are exactly what few if any amateur organizations ever have in sufficient amounts.

In planning for some modern interiors in plays it is possible to have certain sections hinged so that fitting and lacing are unnecessary. A long straight back wall may be

built in two sections hinged, so that the entire side of a room may be set in a few seconds. As a door usually has wall space on both sides another combination of three hinged flats may be evolved. This triple piece will serve as a single wall with the door in the middle, or the door can be brought close to a corner by turning one flat down or across stage to start the adjoining wall. An arch, or wide doorway, may be combined with two wall flats in exactly the same manner. If practicable two pieces to serve as room corners might be hinged.

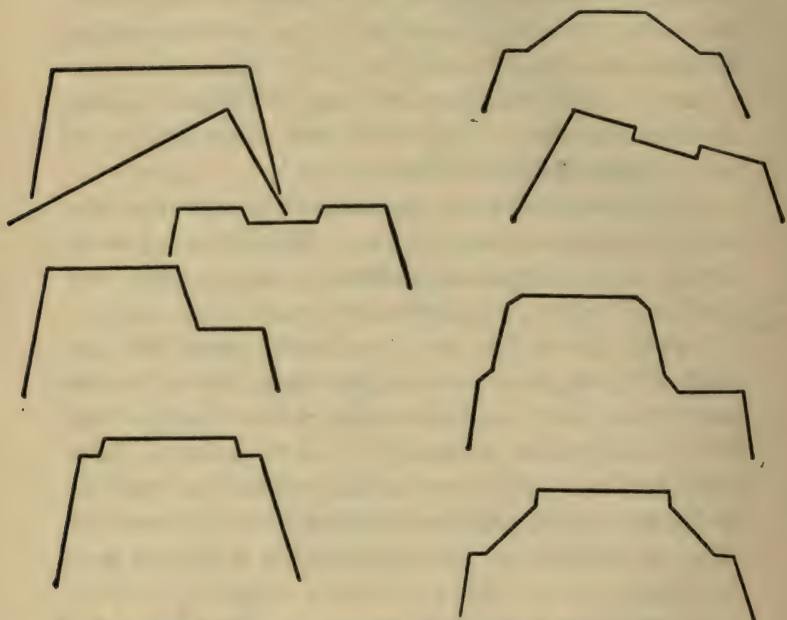
Your idea of what you want should be discussed with a builder of professional scenery. He will show you or invent for you ingenious methods of carrying out your projects of which you would never dream.

Scenery frames are most satisfactory when they are built by professional scene builders who work accurately from drawn plans or scaled models, or when they are built by good carpenters in exactly the same manner. Joints must be firm, angles must be right angles, edges must fit, doors must swing and close freely, the frames must last. Even for small stages the cost of lumber is an item to be kept low.

Unless you are forced to, do not use the old-fashioned painted borders to represent ceilings. If your stage has a permanent ceiling so low that the audience can see it, build your sets so that they almost touch it. There may be a small space between the scenery and the ceiling, but if you make the gap small, and treat properly the tops of the walls, that opening will not jar upon spectators. If the stage slopes until the spaces on each side increase towards

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the front, that is, if stage floor and ceiling are not parallel, set the side walls to point off-stage towards the front, and these gaps will not be so apparent. They will not disturb any one even if they are seen. Audiences accept worse



Various shapes of interiors secured by different arrangements of the same pieces of scenery.

things in every professional performance. If your space above the stage will let you hang a ceiling, by all means, have one made. Have it painted a color not to attract attention.

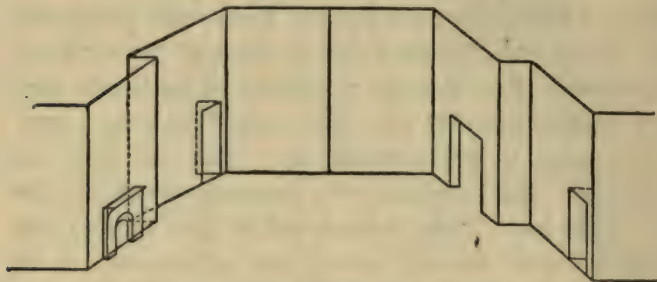
Many scene designers in the endeavor to make a stage look like a room have the rear wall built as a single piece



so that no junctures are visible. The drawback about such a piece of scenery is that it is rather heavy to move, bulky to stack, and too long to use anywhere else. For small stages the best rule is to have all scenery made in sections. Determine upon some unit of size, then have all pieces related to that same scale. Make all the large flats the same width; then have a few smaller sections (called jogs) to provide alcoves, angles, projections, etc. For instance, if your stage space permits, decide upon twenty-one feet as width and fourteen feet as depth of the usual full stage space. Keep this size as the unit of the largest three wall interiors you will set. Then design all your scenery with relation to this standard size. Make all doors the same size. Make arches—wide doorways—twice the size of a single door. Make the rear wall in three sections each seven feet wide, the side walls of two sections each of the same size. Two or four narrow jogs one-fourth the size of the larger flats will provide for rearrangements. Extra sections can be added if unusual doors and windows are needed as for instance doors with transoms or windows with real glass to be broken. Carry this same system of unit or related sizes into all the scenery you construct. Have your steps, platforms, cubes, columns, pylons, if any are needed, bear some mathematical relation to the other parts of your settings. But do not buy or build anything until you need it. Even then, see if something you already have will not serve. Thus, your scenery will be practicable for many purposes.

Learn by other people's errors as well as by their achievements. An enthusiastic club director told me of the re-

markable dining room interior she had just had finished by professional scene builders in which the plaster was gone from parts of the walls, leaving the laths beneath exposed. She had actually had those holes painted upon the newly made scenery, rendering it useless for any play except the one in rehearsal. When I suggested that the room should have been finished properly, and then those marks



Interior of room showing combination of pieces.

of decay painted upon pieces of canvas and attached to the walls for this one time only, she nearly fainted. No idea of future uses of that large set had ever entered her head. A productions committee ordered an interior set for an English comedy. An idea of spaciousness was to be secured upon the small stage by designing a deep box set. The rear wall was built of three flats with a door in the middle one. That was good. Each side wall also was of three pieces. The two nearest the footlights were each seven feet wide; the one joining the rear wall was six. If there had been a necessity of economizing, two of these flats could have been dispensed with easily merely by in-

creasing the width of the two front ones from seven feet to eight feet or even eight and one half. The three or four feet cut off the depth of the room would not have impaired either the acting or the appearance. Reducing the number of pieces to be handled also makes for better stage manipulation in amateur productions. Another director with one set which had served in several plays already, added Greek shields to give a classic tone, and at another time stretched a decorative Chinese border painted on paper around the top to secure an oriental effect.

Remember always that arrangement, furniture, hangings, and costumes will help amazingly in securing effects.

## CHAPTER VII

### CREATING THE STAGE PICTURE

FOR setting realistic plays a good general rule is to set them realistically. This does not mean that one should go so far as the limits of inclusiveness exhibited by Mr. Belasco in *The Return of Peter Grimm*, ever since its run held up as the absolute *reductio ad absurdum* of fidelity to things as they are. But it does mean that the setting should be in the tone, in the style, in the atmosphere of the drama itself. When a director turns to drama of other kinds, he must invoke different methods. Romantic, historical, poetic, costume, fanciful dramas admit of treatments in the same veins. They allow originality, bizarre effects, pictorial settings, spectacular appeals.

Some directors have peculiar talents in one or another of the preceding kinds. One will be at his best with realistic matters, another will be successful only with the historical, a third will always be able to create unusual stage decorations. In your amateur organization, therefore, you should try to fit the group producing it to the play itself. One pair who will be applauded for oriental scenic and costume effects, may fail ignominiously with the G. Bernard Shaw dentist's office in *You Never Can Tell*. There is as much real stage ability in a good realistic set as in any other kind, but most amateurs will always feel that there are more opportunities for original creation in the others.



If you are going to present even a few dramas outside the realistic field you will likely find many chances to use a back-drop answering the purposes of a cyclorama. For this, in all usual amateur productions, a back-drop as large in both dimensions as possible is all that need be provided. In having it painted, do not make the mistake of having it colored a flat bright blue. I know of one like this; it was evolved as a notable experiment. It looks always like nothing except a kalsomined kitchen wall. Have your back-drop painted quite light at the bottom, gradually growing bluer as the color rises. Take a discriminating squint at the heavens from the horizon up towards the zenith on any clear day, and you will get about the proper gradation of color. Dark blue lights will make this as deep as any night sky, while red and yellow will tint it beautifully for dawn or sunset. White, in varying degrees, will make it cold and chill.

Before such a drop you can suggest practically anything demanded by plays. A medieval town can be pictured if you set a wall across the stage near the rear, then mask at each side by showing the ends of houses. You can represent four streets converging in an open space. Or at one side you may set the corner of a house, at the other trees or formal hedges to suggest the garden, and across the back a wall or high trimmed hedge with high barred gates. A few low rock pieces, some scrubby trees, and a few gaunt, taller ones to mask the sides, will suggest a bleak wind-swept plateau or table-land against the clear blue sky. Put a low line of hills some feet before this same back-drop, or the blue of a distant river with the sil-

houette of a town on its further side, erect an angled oriental house-wall at one side of the stage with a few palms projecting above it, and at the other side erect a city gate, and you have an eastern exterior setting to serve for many different plays.

If you set a pair of wood wings at right and left of the stage, giving the suggestion of hedges and clipped copses, a pair of lower hedges towards the rear, behind them some Lombardy poplars lower than the side trees, and directly behind the break in the hedge at the center, some flower urns and the top of a flight of steps, you will have the terrace of a formal garden quite suitable for all of *Love's Labor's Lost* and Olivia's garden in *Twelfth Night*.

A blue sky is usually exactly the proper backing to be seen through the windows of an interior set. So useful is such a back-drop that one might almost say it should be the first piece of scenery to be purchased for an amateur stage.

Though your available equipment of scenery is restricted, try to avoid monotony. Remember that amateurs have made greater strides in the material aids to production than in anything else. Try in your case to make your acting as good as the sets your artistic staff can evolve. Do not adopt any single device of stage decoration and use it so frequently that it becomes monotonous. Try for as many different kinds of effects as you can conceive. Monotony will always repel audiences. Lord Dunsany's most recent skit, *A Good Bargain*, may be set unconventionally, but the interior for his tragedy, *A Night at an Inn*, can be nothing except a room in an abandoned hostelry. Ingenu-

ity would be not only wasted on it, but dangerous for the effect of the tragedy. Many plays of Shakespeare can be acted before curtains, but hardly Strindberg's *The Stronger*, which prescribes "A corner of a ladies' restaurant." That charming French pantomime, *Pierrot the Prodigal*, may fittingly be performed in settings which suggest a child's picture-book but it would be the height of ridiculous folly to put Shaw's *Candida* or *You Never Can Tell* in such surroundings. Alfred Kreymborg's *Lima Beans* may be as futuristic as you please. But the first act of Molière's *Le Médecin Malgré Lui* cannot be acted among trees fantastically created by folds of colored cloth dropping from the stage loft, because every one in the audience would recognize the silliness of trying to cut faggots from any part of that impossible forest. It is in such spreading of devices, excellent within limitations, to the wide field of all drama that enthusiastic art directors make their monumental blunders.

Let us consider a few detailed specifications for stage settings of the kinds of plays for which amateurs are likely to need help.

First considerations are that there must be something at the back of the stage, and something at each side to mask the spaces beyond. This necessity of providing scenery to cover the sides of the stage has frequently had a decided influence upon the setting which the dramatist chooses for his play. We are told that Synge first planned to have *The Playboy of the Western World* open in the plowed field where Christy strikes his father, but he could not see any possible side wings for that wide, windy corner of high, dis-

tant hills. Eugene O'Neill gave the scenery designer a difficult task in his descriptions of the open spaces in *Beyond the Horizon*, the last scene of which was not even put upon the stage.

Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* might be acted in a picturesque, conventionalized Elizabethan stage, such as Walter Hampden used in his *Hamlet* except that Shakespeare so definitely demands knocking on a gate in full view of the audience that some provision must be made for that comedy feature. If a different kind of set is attempted, let me suggest one which will answer.

Hang a blue back-drop across the rear of the stage. Several feet in front of it erect a wall some six or seven feet high, above which extend several tree profiles. Have a gate a little to one side of stage center. Having placed as much of this as space permits, erect in front of it all the interior for the first scene of the play. This may be merely a small boxed interior, decorated with shields, hangings, and furnishings to suggest a room in the Palace of the Duke of Ephesus. Easily removed, it does not delay the action of the first act. If you want some slight novelty, you might make only two walls visible, sloping one gradually almost fully across stage, then bringing the short one sharply down towards the corner. Or you might have columns at the back mark open spaces through which show stretches of the trees and sky, which are already set for the subsequent scenes. After the interior has been removed, place a couple of houses, right and left; arrange a few Greek stone benches about the open space, and you need make no further changes for any following scenes of



the play. In the last act the nunnery from which the long-lost mother and wife is summoned can be imagined as off-stage. As the last act proceeds, an effective change in lighting will enhance the scene. One character remarks, "The dial points at five," so sunset colors may spread over the back sky, then advance to the fore-stage to tint the entire picture.

Such a method will produce attractive, beautiful settings at little cost. This plan might almost be called a stationary setting.

Quite different are the demands made by Calthrop and Barker's *The Harlequinade*, a play admirably suited to amateur actors and audiences.

This fantastic excursion requires five different sets. They are the Banks of the Styx, an Italian Garden, Lord Eglantine's Room, the Ninety-ninth Street Theater, exterior and interior. The last scene shows the Banks of the Styx again.

So many sets present difficulties for amateurs. For this play the matter is all the more complicated because the changes of scenery must be made within a certain time, as two characters before the curtain go on talking and announce the next scene. They even give the signal for the curtain. To have the play move smoothly, the stage must be completely set by that time. These requirements were met in the first production in America of *The Harlequinade* by hanging a blue back-drop at the extreme rear of the stage. Just in front of this was set as much of the terrace, ballustrades, trees, and shrubbery of the Italian garden as space would permit. For borders, black draped

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hangings were used, while long black curtains served as wings. These borders and side draperies remained unchanged throughout the whole performance, serving as black frames around the colored pictures set within and behind them.

Before the portions of the garden already set were stood two rock-like profiles to suggest the bleak Banks of the Styx. Under a cold blue light they seemed as unreal as Hades should be. In direct lines parallel to the foot-lights, shafts of colored lights were thrown straight across the stage, making various planes of light. Such distribution made possible the entrance of Mercury in a brilliant high light, while all the other characters on the stage stood in subdued amber.

When this scene was concluded only the two profiles and a couple of rocks had to be removed. A couple of tree wings were set and the Italian garden was complete. To dress the eighteenth century room of Lord Eglantine colored drapes were lowered from above, and a blue and white wall was set straight across the rear. Furniture, pictures, and costumes did the rest. The exterior of the Ninety-ninth Street Theater was a shallow scene before a garish curtain containing advertising signs, lowered near the front. Behind it was set the black, white, and green futuristic interior made by a single back-drop. The removal of this, and the replacing of the rock profiles of the first scene revealed again the blue back-drop and the Banks of the Styx.

The recommendation has been given that scenery should be constructed by professional scene builders. There may

be a great deal of fun and some experience involved in concocting amateur sets carpentered, covered, and painted by tyros, and in some instances where that peculiar educational fetish "self-expression" is sought, such practices may be indulged in. If such sets indicate their origin and growth by awkward angles, crooked lines, sprawling designs, yawning gaps, and difficulty of manipulation, the audience will be tolerant and generous in allowances, but the fact remains that what they are being offered is not a good production but a makeshift. For amateurs the ease of changing, the lightness, and the durability of well-made scenery outweigh all objections against it.

I know of one school which had built in 1912 an interior set of which each flat is fourteen feet high, seven feet wide. There are two jogs to make alcoves or projections, bringing the number of pieces to ten. Two of the large flats, hinged, make an arch, or wide doorway, which is usually draped with curtains. There are two ordinary doors. Carrying out the principle laid down some pages back of not having the interior walls suggest too decidedly any one period, an artist and a professional scene builder were consulted by the director of plays. Hundreds of colored sketches of interiors from the scenery company's plates were examined, stage settings were compared, and finally a rather severe, lined, paneled wall was decided on. The color scheme was determined with relation to possible future uses as well as the one then contemplated. As the auditorium walls and curtain were tan, the scenery colors were chosen in tan, gray, and gray green. The features of the walls are the plainest of moldings and panels. In

its years of frequent and none too gentle handling it has served in a score of totally different plays from Acts I and V of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to a modern apartment. Treatment of the walls, and the furniture make these settings convincing. It has been modified and amplified in the following ways.

For a modern original comedy, French doors were added to the wide doorway. When *The Far-Away Princess* by Sudermann was produced the effect of a porch had to be secured. The wide doorway was set with a large gauze panel. An extra flat exactly like the original was built, but in it was set a corresponding gauze panel. To make a smaller window through which the young student climbs, one of the doors of the original set had a panel built across the bottom. Above this was hung a swinging gauze panel to represent a glass window. Behind all these was set foliage, tree, and sky backing.

At another time, *Zaragüeta*, by the two popular Spanish playwrights, Carrion and Aza, was staged. The culmination of this two-act farce-comedy depends upon drenching the faultlessly tailored Zaragüeta with water from a garden force-pump. The hose is stuck through the transom of a door behind which a different person is believed to be hiding. The old interior, with pictures, furniture, hangings, added, and the brilliant Spanish costumes of the characters, served admirably. All that had to be constructed was another flat, this time with a door above which swung a practicable transom. One little incongruity was easily eradicated. This transomed door had to be very



close to another one. The two doors of the original sets had no transoms. It would not do, of course, to put in the same wall one doorway without a transom and one doorway with that addition. There was no need to have constructed another flat for the second transom is not used in the play. The scene painter duplicated on a piece of canvas the transom which had been carpentered. This small rectangle of canvas was fastened above the second doorway. After the play it was removed and kept for future use. As a matter-of-fact, some five years later it was used in a second production of the same play.

For *Fanny and the Servant Problem*, also known as *The Second Lady Bantock*, by Jerome K. Jerome, it was easy to provide furniture, fire-screens, rugs, hangings, and paintings. The central feature of this English drawing room is a portrait of a family ancestor. To emphasize this an alcove was set in the rear wall by means of the jogs. As the best feature to center attention in one part of a room is a fireplace, one with a mantel was built for this occasion. Above it the portrait of the former Lady Bantock was hung. An electric bulb on the mantel shelf below it gave another chance to center interest upon it by having the young hero turn on the light as he explained to his wife the veneration of the family for the original of the painting. In a side wall the wide doorway became the opening to a wide recessed window, the sides of which were made of the two French doors, while the window itself was the wide gauze panel, already described as having been made for Sudermann's *The Far-Away Princess*.

With little upon the walls this same set framed *The Dear Departed* by Stanley Houghton and the later acts of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*. More recently it was utilized for *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, but for this play the flats were covered with beautiful long tapestries borrowed from a director who had them made to hang upon the walls of the English country house required in *Art and Opportunity* by Harold Chapin. Incidentally, ten days after they had adorned the Paris house of Monsieur Jourdain they draped the small stage of a little theater as a room in a Sultan's harem. In Monsieur Jourdain's house, these draperies came almost to the floor. The strip of wall space below them was broken from the view of the audience by calculated placing of pieces of furniture, or screens with strips of brightly-colored cloths thrown across them to catch and hold the eye. Denuded of its tapestried coverings this same interior three days later with different furniture was housing a fashion and food show to exhibit the work of the domestic science department of the school.

The foregoing is some indication of the varied uses to which the front of this scenery has been put. This set had also another side. Its frames were very well made. About seven feet above the bottom, cross-pieces of wood were placed. Strips at forty-five degrees brace the bottom and top corners.

The rear side of many sets built for amateur use is quite usually decorated as a kitchen in the walls of which the frames just described are painted as wooden joists while the canvas panels are covered with a flat tint. Or some other room may be indicated by utilizing these same divi-



Photograph by Beitt

Above: *The Bracelet*, by Alfred Sutro. Cornell Dramatic Club at the New York State Fair, Syracuse.

Below: *Dream Boats*, by Dugald Walker. The College Club, Cleveland.



Photograph by Arthur Kales

*Interior*, by Maurice Maeterlinck. Community Theater, Hollywood. Designed by Grace Dickson. The directions of the play should be considered with this setting.



sions. Many amateur directors do not seem to realize the practicability of such rear views. I know of one school organization which, during the war, was to present a one-act comedy of the district behind the lines in France. Knowing that during the next autumn the school wanted to produce *The Taming of the Shrew*, this first group, when it had its scenery built, generously had its French kitchen painted on the rear so that the next users could paint upon the level canvas front a wainscoted Elizabethan room.

There are more things to enumerate concerning the first interior being considered here.

When *The Comedy of Errors* was put into rehearsal it was decided to make only one change of setting after the first scene. In order to do that quickly, as much of the stage as could be was set with suggestions of an "open space in Ephesus" for the main portion of the drama. For the first scene, "A hall in the Duke's palace," only one corner of the spacious room was shown. This was done by setting in a long, gradually receding line several flats to represent one wall stretching almost entirely across the stage; then from its corner a short wall was brought sharply down stage to the edge of the proscenium opening.

The wooden frames which show on the rear of the interior pieces were painted black, and the canvas was tinted tan. The rear of one door was painted to suggest a heavily timbered gray and black one. Upon the upper panels were hung round silvered Greek shields. A couple of stone benches, several animal skins flung over them and on the floor, and the characters in their Greek costumes, set the stage quite effectively for scene I of *The Comedy of*

*Errors.* When the rear of such scenery is turned toward the audience it may be necessary to devise some method for fastening it other than by lacing, for the ropes stretching from near the top to near the bottom may appear incongruous. In this case the flats were overlapped a few inches. The lines were thrown over the top and tied to stage braces which thus were held tight against the scenery frames. This facilitated quick striking.

A few years later these black and tan flats were increased in number to set the drinking scene in *Twelfth Night*.

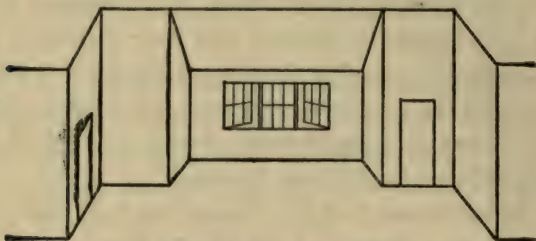
For *The Chinese Lantern* by Laurence Housman, some adaptations were made. The open arch was used as the frame of the painting by the old master from which the painter himself miraculously comes to life. Behind this opening the picture itself was built—a platform, vase, railing, rug, mandolin, a tree branch painted on paper, and black velvet curtains being used. The placing and manipulation of lights to effect the mystery belong to the discussion of lighting. The large gauze window prepared for the porch of *A Far-Away Princess* was outlined in black, then covered with translucent paper through which colored light might be thrown. To bind the room together a Chinese design of straight lines, a few curves, many squares and rectangles, was painted in black, tan, and blue in sections upon pieces of ordinary brown wrapping paper. These were hung around the tops, both decorating the chamber and hiding the corner braces, some of which for other uses had been painted black and seemed slightly out of harmony in a Chinese studio. It would have been a grave

mistake to paint that border on the scenery itself. Although the stage may appear large and slightly bare in an illustration it must be remembered that Oriental costumes are brilliant and beautiful, and that this play provides for large numbers of people and much action upon the stage. This school stage set should be compared with the set designed and especially built for this same play by Sam Hume pictured in *Theater Arts* for February, 1917.

This one set of scenery, front and rear, has in eight years served for two original plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Far-Away Princess*, *The Dear Departed*, *Zaragüeta*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Chinese Lantern*, *The Birds' Christmas Carol*; *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Fanny and the Servant Problem*, *Ulysses*, and *Green Stockings*.

One little theater had an interior set built for one of the acts of *The Honeymoon* by Arnold Bennett. It is an English room in which the brown timbers show around the plastered panels. Had there been a need of economy this might have been painted upon the rear side, utilizing the necessary wooden frames as part of the room woodwork. One third of the set consists of a low piece about ten feet wide by eight high. Almost the entire upper portion of this, down to about twenty-four inches from the floor, is cut out. This opening is filled at times by window sashes hinged at the sides. Behind it the eye of the spectator meets either the blue back-drop, a cyclorama, or some backing of foliage. At each side edge of this section is hinged another which has an upper line sharply rising until it reaches the ordinary ceiling height of a room, say, some

twelve feet. All the other pieces belonging to this room are this latter height. The general effect is of a cozy, irregular English house, with quaint odd corners about it. Another advantage is that a small ceiling covers the larger part of the room. Variety can be secured by placing the doors at various points, by shifting the position of a right-angled projection which must eke out the three flap combination to make the wall long enough, by the hangings, and the furniture. Shortly after its appearance in *The Honey-*



Cottage interior, with sloping ceiling over rear alcove.

*moon* it served admirably for the villager's humble cottage in *The Point of View* by Eden Phillpotts. It also represented the first scene of *Hindle Wakes*, and the one set in *The Tragedy of Nan*. The last time I saw it it had risen in dignity. Sobered by evening lighting, soft rugs, religious pictures and books, a library table, a reading lamp, a green crucifix upon the wall, and darkness outside, it was the Canon's study in the third act of *Don* by Rudolph Besier. Thus, within a few months this one small interior had served at least five different purposes.

Interiors can be so easily decorated and beautified by hangings and furniture that they lend themselves more flex-



ibly to differentiation than do exteriors. Some of the attempts of professionals with space, material, and experience at their command are so ludicrous that amateurs need not be discouraged at their shortcomings. The boldest professional instance of utilization of equipment, which I am trying to outline here for amateurs, I saw in New York in the winter of 1919-1920 in the stage settings of Acts I and III of a crude melodrama entitled *The Storm*. The scene is laid in a deep forest of the Canadian Northwest. Behind the mechanical tree trunks rising high above the eye line was hung the back-drop upon which more forest was painted except down the middle where a break was left in the trees to show the distant windings of a woodland stream meeting far away the dull gray of the sky line. These two features of the landscape—sky and water—had to be in light colors to take the red glow of the onrushing forest fire, which supplies the real thrill of the uncouth woodland bedroom melodrama. Straight across the back-drop, not so clearly discernible among the darker colors of the trees, but as plain as black lines, stretched the horizontal ends of the seams of the canvas, which, unquestionably, painted on its front for some other play, had been resurrected from the storehouse to be utilized again. Perhaps I should never have noticed this if the play had held my attention more closely, and if I had not myself used the rears of several back-drops in amateur productions.

The first portion of any exterior, I should recommend, is the light blue sky back-drop already described. This should be as wide and as long as the outside limits of your space will permit. If you can afford two, so much the

better. Have a straight one clear across the back of the stage. Have a curved one long enough to extend quite around past the line of sight at the edges of the proscenium opening. Unless these go extremely far above the stage you may have to add borders before them to mask the border lights, hanging scenery, tackle, etc. It is not absolutely necessary to stretch them tightly, as small folds sometimes produce agreeable and natural variations of tone in color and lighting, but the fewer folds there are the better the effect. If painted, the blue should not be a flat tone; let it reproduce the actual color of sky—light at the horizon, gradually deepening towards the zenith, as already described. Make it light enough to take such colors as you consider necessary. The effect of a tightly-stretched, evenly-colored canvas panel has been described already; it resembles a kalsomined kitchen wall.

Before such a back-drop you may put practically anything you design, and light it exactly as nature or your fancy directs.

Several years ago such a back-drop was made for a stage upon which was to be produced *Love's Labor's Lost*. To save money it was agreed to enact all the scenes in a single set. The artificiality, the balance, the preciousity of the comedy gave the cue for the scenery. At each side were set hinged wood-wings in balanced pairs. Those nearest the footlights showed clipped dark green hedges above a low border of pink and blue flowers. Above the hedge stretched outlined Normandy poplars and other garden trees, painted in flat tones. Only a few peeps of blue sky appeared in this first pair. The second pair of wings had

more color. They were similar to the front pair in general design, but the greens were brighter, the foliage less dense. An additional splurge of brilliant color was furnished by painting several tall clumps of flowering bushes high above the level of the hedges which bordered these wings. Behind these, and extending until they almost met in the center were two hedges, along the base of which were repeated the pink and blue flowers from the wood-wings. Exactly behind the opening in the center, quite close to the bottom of the blue drop, was set a low profile piece suggesting the summit of a flight of steps leading down to lower terraces of this formal garden. Four terra cotta urns overrunning with flowers carried this effect further, but it was finally emphasized by silhouetted trees against the blue sky, lower than those in the foreground, evidently rising high from the next terrace below. Towards the conclusion of the play sunset changed the appearance, and finally moonlight and lantern light tinted the ending picturesquely.

A few years later in *The Comedy of Errors* this backdrop and the silhouette trees and some of the wood-wings were requisitioned again. With the addition of a wall and gate, and the ends of a couple of houses, the open place in Ephesus already described in this chapter was set.

That same year *Twelfth Night* was staged by older performers. Some rocks used in an earlier season for *Ulysses* by Stephen Phillips served for the first scene. A group of forest trees—some wings, other forms for other places about the stage—were used for the Duke's grounds. Being rather heavy and sober—they were built first for the forest in



which Sganarelle does so little work in Act I of *Le Médecin Malgré Lui*—they bore out the tone of the Duke's sentimental rhapsodies and Viola's whimsical sallies on unrequited love. For Olivia's garden the scenery first prepared for *Love's Labor's Lost*, with its brightness and balance made an adequate setting. Street scenes for Malvolio's return of the ring to Viola, and scenes between Antony and Stephano took place in what had already been an "open place in Ephesus," in *The Comedy of Errors*. The drinking scene setting has already been discussed.

Except when demands for realism curb originality, designers of sets for one-act plays have a wide field for the exercise of individual talents. There is always a risk in decorating the stage in a novel manner if the audience must gaze upon it for some three hours. In a short play, the danger of fatigue or of diverting attention is not so great, for the picture if it shock, startle, or offend, is before the eyes for only some half hour or less. In a bill of three short plays one of them should be so different as to stand out boldly in contrast with the other two. It is in this securing of the right degree and kind of unusualness that the sympathetic decorative instincts of a producer or scene designer find their congenial scope. He must recall always that an audience is an entity sensitive to suggestion, willing to follow if properly led, open-minded to good intentions and results, but suspicious of tricks, hollowness, sham, insincerity. Beginning controllers of amateur groups will endeavor to seize the temper and temperament of their anticipated or actual public, and appreciating it at its real best—not its assumed best, strive to lead it to an accept-



ance and approval of the most honest exemplification of theatrical art embellishment.

It would be impossible even to hint at the possibilities of originality and variety in providing surroundings for short plays. It is beyond the power of one person to record the achievements of the past. No one spectator could attend all the performances in which new effects are being attempted, frequently achieved. If he could read every program for a year, study every photograph taken, examine every light plot, he would still be unable to describe, much less, explain and criticize, all the methods employed and the impressions registered. A comparative consideration of a few settings as actually carried out may help directors who want to try new methods but are hesitant before the uncertainty of their chances which hover between a possible success and a probable waste of time, energy, and what is far worse for amateurs, money.

It will be instructive to look at a few descriptions prepared by dramatists, then see how their specifications have been carried out. I shall cite first two entirely different kinds of plays.

“The room disclosed to view is an attractively furnished living-room or library. Well-chosen pictures are on the walls, good books are about. In the rear wall is the heavily curtained wide doorway. At the right is a wide window. In the middle of the wall which has been removed between the stage and the audience was an open fireplace. The andirons, logs, and hearth remain. At the left of the fireplace sits the Wife gazing into the red glow. At the right sits the Husband reading by the light from

the candle in an artistic holder upon a small table at some distance from his left shoulder. Its flame is hidden from the spectator's eye by a small screen."

Notice that this setting is modern, realistic. It is such a room as may be found in most homes of refinement. The description is fairly definite. It is true that no particular color scheme is specified, but there is really no need for insistence upon such a detail. That can certainly be left to the taste of the producer. The next paragraph is the description by the director of the Little Theater of Indianapolis of the setting he devised for this play.

"Most of my staging was done with lights, of course having the fireplace, the andirons, fender, etc., at the footlights, the two chairs facing it, and a small mahogany table beside the Husband. I took the liberty of backing the Wife's chair with a big screen, over which was draped a geranium-colored silk shawl, which was the one spot of color in the scene. It formed a perfect background. The window was indicated simply by a flood of blue light from one side. The whole thing was concentrated into a twelve foot proscenium which served to localize the effect."

The following is another illustration of the same kind of original interpretation, applied to *Pokey* by Philip Moeller.

"The scene is in the neighborhood of the unpronounceable Werowocomoco where Powhatan is chief. The entire beautiful legend is played on top and at the foot of a tall cliff on a plateau overlooking a valley. Far away spread the plains, and in the distance are the mountains on the horizon beyond Werowocomoco—if there are any mountains

on the horizon in the distance beyond Werowocomoco . . . The scene should be wild and beautiful—beautiful with all the wildness of an unrestrained and savage school. It should be permeated with a J. Fenimore Cooperish autumnal atmosphere, because—though the piece is played during Spring and Summer—one always associates Indians with Autumn, and so we'll have the time autumnal."

One production of this carried out the author's specifications in quite an original manner. A cyclorama was hung across the rear and at the sides of the stage. Upon this was cast a strong yellow light which never varied in intensity throughout the two scenes. At the right of the stage as viewed from the audience was a cube shaped rock about five feet high upon which the action began between Rolfe and Pocahontas. This rock was colored a brilliant dark red. Upon the two sides visible to the spectators were painted large green flowers shaped like daisies, outlined in wide black lines. Across the stage near the rear extended a profile line of low red boulders, red stumps of trees, and large flowers, all painted red, green, and black. From the rear of this shelf and from the rear of the table at the right of the stage there was supposed to be a sheer drop of hundreds of feet down the vertical cliff. For the second scene no tent was erected, as described in the printed play. A couple of tree branches were stuck up. Between them stretched a rope from which dangled a red flannel shirt and three long scalps.

This colorful, rather conventionalized setting was entirely in keeping with the frivolous burlesquing intention of the play itself.

Sometimes a clever masking of the space above by some device utilized at the front of the stage will save a great deal of otherwise necessary scenery. For some plays this can be erected, for others not.

In a performance of *The Rising of the Moon* by Lady Gregory, I saw two wooden posts standing close to the curtain line. Resting on them were boards rising vertically as though to meet a roof above. To right and left irregular piles of barrels and boxes masked the side spaces. Further back were coils of ropes, and a couple of anchors. Some square timbers laid parallel with the footlights, and a couple of round posts indicated the edge of the wharf. Around the entire set hung the cyclorama in dark blue to suggest night sky. The effect was that the spectator was under such a shed as usually covers wharves, and was looking beyond that shed to the end of the wharf and further across the water to the dark blue sky. Everything except the cyclorama—for the nautical details could be varied—could be borrowed or easily built. Except the cyclorama, there was no scenery, in the usual sense of that term.

In a performance of *Altruism*, by Carl Ettinger, the quais of the Seine were represented. Hanging from above the proscenium opening and sloping back was a striped awning above the tables of a café terrace. Strips of this same awning at the right and left completely masked the sides. The entrance to the café was through these side curtains. Towards the back, as though across the street, a slightly raised platform was the pavement. The low parapet extending across stage was the stone wall beyond and below which flowed the Seine. A few profiles of build-





Photograph by Kajiwara

Above: *Pomander Walk*, by Louis N. Parker. Central High School, Washington.

Below: *Pierrot's Christmas*, by Bessier and Monti. Designed by Lawrence Ewald. The Artists' Guild, Saint Louis.



Photograph by McBride Studio



Above: *Prunella*, by Laurence Housman and Granville Barker. University of Washington, Seattle. Designed by John Ely.

Below: *The Chinese Lantern*, by Laurence Housman. Central High School, Saint Louis.

ings on the opposite side of the river were backed by the blue cyclorama. The whole stage was bathed in the brilliant yellow of the Parisian afternoon sun. The general effect was perfect, yet the contributing elements were simple.

Exactly this same kind of pictorial effect was secured in a production of *The Tents of the Arabs*, by Lord Dunsany. The stage setting for this well-known short play requires a gate beyond which lies the desert into which the tired king goes with the wild child of its distances. I have seen a half dozen different conceptions of this, but only one which in any way made emphatic the contrast between the city and the level sands. Half way back from the footlights the city wall was erected, in the middle of which was the gate leading the gaze beyond it across the trackless expanse to the blue depths of the cyclorama. Just behind the proscenium arch a few brilliant strips of oriental cloths were fastened. Their other ends were fastened to the top of the city wall. Sweeping in graceful curves from front to rear they made a grateful shade in which passers-by naturally paused to chat before stepping out into the merciless heat of the unshaded sands. The corresponding dimming of light on the forestage also marked the heightening of the yellow glare beyond the archway of the wide gate. In this arrangement, as in the previously described ones, there was actually only a little scenery, in the strict sense, required to set the stage. The wall was the only constructed part. A couple of low platforms served as steps to take persons over its sill. For the impression made, this setting was extremely economical.

It would probably be a mistake to utilize this device too frequently, but it will save money and trouble in many cases. Somewhat like it is another forestage treatment serving somewhat the same purpose.

In the second scene of *The King and Queen*, by Tagore, the courtyard of a palace was shown. Most of the stage was bathed in brilliant yellow light upon cream-colored walls. The dazzling effect of this was enhanced by having no footlights; in fact there were no lights from the front. Just behind the curtain line was hung a silhouette of three oriental archways, so that spectators in the auditorium felt that they were in a darkened alcove, peering out into the broad sunlight where the story was being enacted. A slightly mysterious effect was added by having the open archways covered with gauze which mellowed the light without detracting from its brilliance. The solid portion of the wall above the arches masked nearly all of the space above and behind them. Only a few usual wood-wings were required to suggest the garden at both sides. By keeping this foliage well off-stage attention was kept from it and centered upon the characters. In this stage setting as in others already discussed there was secured a maximum of effect at a minimum of expense and effort.

A few other uses of draperies in connection with regular scenery may contain hints for adoptions in similar instances. One of the *Diminutive Dramas* by Maurice Baring, *The Aulis Difficulty*, calls simply for "Agamemnon's Tent at Aulis." On one stage a back-drop and wings of a forest were set, then there was caught up in the middle a great square of brightly colored stuff which, raised to some



twenty feet above stage, could be draped back in realistic representation of a Greek warrior's tent. Had there been no back-drop of forest trees, the tent could easily have been drawn to the sides until no back-drop would have been necessary, or the regular standby of the blue cyclorama would have answered the requirement.

In interiors of whimsical or fanciful decorations, draperies will often take the place of the usual flat ceilings or of the inexcusable painted borders. In an amateur *révue* I saw the entire stage draped beautifully for a dance number by using a single large cloth of black and white squares. It had been fastened to the usual drop lines, three across the front far enough from the edge of the material to allow a border just behind the top of the proscenium opening, then along a line which let enough hang in irregular folds to reach the stage at the rear. In this pavilion-like space a brightly-costumed group performed an unusual dance.

The same scheme can be used in a room for certain kinds of plays. In *Whims*, the title under which the Washington Square Players acted *Caprice*, by Alfred de Musset, the walls were covered with pleated blue silk, while the ceiling was a dome of the same material caught up into a rosette in the center. With the French costumes of a century ago, the effect was charming.

Exactly the same thing was done by Winthrop Ames in his production a few seasons ago of *Pierrot the Prodigal*. In the second act Phrynette's boudoir in Paris was tastefully decorated in filmy chiffon, with a tent ceiling drawn up into a center rosette.

The ideas here suggested can be carried out with a sav-

ing of money but they entail extreme care in designing, perfect skill in coloring, and exquisite taste in execution. There is the nicest line in stage matters between simplicity and skimpiness, between art and decoration, between color and gaudiness, between richness and show. To overstep the allowable limit and pass into the cheap imitation spells failure in the amateur realm. Endless experiment, painstaking consideration, ceaseless adapting, ingenious innovations, form the experience and develop the knowledge from which come later the surest successes, even when they are the most audacious.

## CHAPTER VIII

### COSTUMES AND MAKE-UP

IN discussing the need for economy which nearly every little theater administration must exercise it was stated that by avoiding all costume plays during an entire season the expenditure of a great deal of money should be avoided. One director has written me that he uses no costume plays. So the practice must be feasible, and acceptable to some audiences. The main objection which may be urged against such a restriction is that an entire season of plays without some inclusion of beauty, color, picturesqueness, local color, romance, the historic past, or the distant present, must become decidedly monotonous to the eye. How monotonously familiar all the actors must get to look to the regular patrons! Not many groups are so consistently exclusive of one of the most fascinating theater arts—the appeal by means of costume.

As a matter of fact no avoidance of any kind of play will eliminate totally the need for some costumes, for no selection can be made in which all the performers can simply walk on in their ordinary wearing apparel. More parts have to be dressed than the opposite. By adhering to modern dramas it is quite possible to get costumes by borrowing, or making, or concocting, or combining them from personal effects. A farmer needs as appropriate a costume as a Spanish matador. Only the former's garb can be

foraged for, while the latter's would have to be hired. There is so charming an effect from beautiful costumes that I believe no director will voluntarily cut himself off from their reasonable use.

Costumes upon a stage are regarded in a different manner from any others. First of all their wearers are set at a distance from the spectators, they are marked off within a definite space, they are described as being "in the picture." The frame indicates the demarkation between them and the beholders. Only in conventionally conceived exercises or frankly artificial and romantic forms of drama should that demarkation be eradicated. The stage is the stage because it is not the audience. The latter can be made to share in all the stage carries by the transfer of emotional appeal or intellectual stimulation. Costumed figures are raised upon the platform above the usual line of vision. This at times determines the cut of a gown. For instance, a short skirt always appears shorter when viewed from the house. Secondly, the costumes are displayed under an intensified, and usually colored light. This will determine choice of colors. In his *Essays* published first in 1597, practical Francis Bacon commented upon such details in the producing of Masques. "The colors that show best by candle-light are white, carnation, and a kind of sea-water green. . . . As for rich embroidery, it is lost and not discerned." Tests made of colors under daylight and white electric light will not lead to satisfactory results upon the stage itself. Failure to secure the proper shades and combinations in bought material has induced most cos-



tume workers of keen artistic sense to dye their own stuffs for every production.

Modern costumes for women alone admit of picturesque and colorful accentuation. The effect of the gown of an actress upon an audience cannot always be justly estimated in advance, but it can be considered carefully. Personal preference may have to be corrected by general impression. In not every play can every woman in the cast be allowed to look her best. There must be no clashes of colors or modes. There must be no effects to neutralize or kill others. When elements of the charm of the stage picture need not be considered there must be an appropriateness of garb to characterization. This emphasis of the inward spiritual nature by the outward and visible sign cannot always be left to the taste of the individual actress. Too many of them—in amateur circles, at least—look upon acting as an opportunity to “dress up.” The best looking, the newest, the most fashionable gowns are offered at dress rehearsal for praise. It is difficult to make some histrionic aspirants realize that the best acting may be done in drab, unattractive garments. Absence of color and fit and style may be more needed than their prominence. Detail of paraphernalia may add to the characterization but spoil some other aspect of the presentation. One actress in a smart English comedy carried a chatelaine which suited the rôle perfectly, only it jangled so loudly at the slightest movement that it drowned most of her short speeches. Overdressing a part may be as vexatious as wrong dressing.

For humor the underlying principles of costume design

should be contrast, incongruity, exaggeration, increasing in degree directly as the material of the play recedes from realism and contemporaneousness.

In real life the dictum is oft repeated that "it's not the clothes which make the difference but the manner in which they are worn." This is more patently true on the stage. Some performers are physically and temperamentally unable to wear costumes of certain kinds properly. An actress, trained in poetic, romantic, and character rôles may never be able to look right in ordinary dress. The tragedy queen may try to wear modern sport clothes in the same manner, with fatal results for the effect of a rôle. The hoyden may show through an evening creation.

Nearly all these considerations apply with equal force to men. To many a suit for stage wear is something which "doesn't belong." They seem to have no knack of throwing themselves into their clothes. They seem always to have had the clothes on only for the last ten minutes, instead of having worn them regularly. Evening clothes are extremely dangerous. On the stage men should be at perfect ease in them. Too frequently they show exactly how uncomfortable they actually are. Even when they act as butlers and waiters they miss the carelessness which comes from continuous livery, and instead of forgetting that such suits are working clothes, they are as careful of them as though they were masters and guests instead of servants. Incidentally seldom are the suits of butlers and waiters on the stage slovenly, ill-fitting, and spotted enough.

As Bacon truthfully said, certain meticulous details are lost by the distance between the characters and the spec-

tators. In military costumes not many of the audience will notice either the presence or absence of such things as tips on the patent leathers of a British officer. But they will notice if an American laboring man in rough shirt and overalls wears well-shaped and straight heeled shoes. Most inconsistencies crop out in character parts. The farmer buys blue jeans from the dry-goods store, then wears them with all the shelf creases in them for the first time at the dress rehearsal. He had better hang them out in the rain, kick them about the cellar, and dust the back porch off with them, then shake them out and put them on for the play.

Just as amateurs are likely to neglect the mounting of a realistic drama, so they are likely to be careless about costuming it; yet there is as much chance for artistic endeavor in the every-day as in the distant; and there are many more dangers of serious faults—serious because so painfully apparent to the critical audience. Yet art directors will continue to revel in the costume play.

The best single comment made by any dramatist about costumes (in the ordinary sense of that word) for one of his poetic romances was set down by Rostand as a direction for designers who work with *Les Romanesques*; "The costumes may be anything, provided they are beautiful." In modern plays the characters themselves may help more or less in providing their own costumes. In fanciful, historical, romantic, plays there should be one directing and designing head to produce harmony, balance, gracefulness, and beauty.

There is always danger in hiring costumes from a professional costumer by merely sending a list of characters

and sizes. Even though his stock be large, it may be engaged in advance by other demands, and the presence of two or three incongruous dresses or suits in an otherwise harmonious combination will spoil the effect. The risk is lessened if the members of the costume committee can examine the stock, select exactly what will serve, and then can insist that the chosen articles be the ones delivered. Ordering from a distance multiplies risk a hundredfold. No time remains for changes between dress rehearsal and performances. For this reason the plan of having dress rehearsals earlier than the day of the performance is urged in this book. If you have ever worked with a large cast you know how many shoes will not fit, how many pairs of stockings have not arrived, how many belts have no buckles, how many doublets no hooks and eyes.

The best stocked costumer is certain to have a better array for certain periods than others. Since our greatest dramatic period is Elizabethan, he will be more than likely to be able to costume a Shakespeare comedy adequately. In the history plays he may not be so fortunate. When a director, working with Molière's plays, tries to find suitable costumes at the professional's he is likely to be disappointed. The 1660-1700 period is so little represented in our dramas and upon our stages that costumes little in request are made up in restricted variety and small numbers. In France, the exact opposite is the case.

Among theatrical conventions the dressing of Shakespearean rôles has become almost a fixed one. Granville Barker upset this convention in two of his productions. The Lyric Theater Company, of Hammersmith, costumed



*As You Like It* in early fifteenth century style, had all the material specially dyed and made up, substituted single brilliant colors for the usual elaborate ornamentation, and made an artistic success even if they did startle the patrons of the Memorial Theater at Stratford-on-Avon. As a matter of fact, this play allows the widest variety of individual conceptions for its beautiful appearance.

What shall be done about *Macbeth*? At no time has any American production emphasized so strongly by dress the Scottish element of the tragedy as the New Shakespeare Company's production at Stratford-on-Avon which I saw in 1920. In essence, this style of garb is quite appropriate, for the story is Scotch. Additional recognition is given this by the announcement that one group of Celtic Players in the United States intends to produce it as part of their theatric propaganda.

When Shakespeare placed his scenes in Renaissance Italy he made the costuming easy. But when he wrote *The Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night* he left problems for the modern designer or choosers of costumes. How Greek should be the investiture of the former? Many producers compromise by a conventionalized Italo-Greco style which is in no sense historical, though it may be picturesque. *Twelfth Night* is more difficult because more familiar and more often produced. How can Ilyrian styles be suggested? Again our dependence on Renaissance Italy is apparent in the usual stage pictures, with, however, a recognition of strangeness in the garments of Viola and Sebastian. A bolero jacket, a turban, a short pleated skirt, knee-high leg-gings, are the usual marks of these two characters.

Many a modern designer feels tempted to discard all such conventions and, using only the play and his own ideas, to evolve a novel, picturesque result by absolutely untried means. In this opinion is the basis of the newer stylistic, decorative methods of costuming Shakespeare.

Mere originality should be corrected by supervision or knowledge or common sense. A recent well patronized production of *Hamlet* gave most of its spectators the shock of their lives when Ophelia appeared in the flower and mad scenes. Immemorially the actress during this act has worn white. This color has a real dramatic value at this part of the action, because it emphasizes her youth, her unhappy love, and her sad ending. Yet in this production the star appeared in a long, plain, green gown, which looked like nothing so much as a child's long nightgown which persisted in getting under her feet. I do not know what explanation was ever given for such a choice of color. Perhaps it might have been urged that green fitted better into the general color scheme. It would have been better to admit the apparent truth. The actress was too large and plump to look like afflicted Ophelia. As size is accentuated by white, this more subdued, but entirely inappropriate shade was used. I have seen performances of *Julius Cæsar* in which—since the major part of the company's repertory was Italian comedy and English history—the actresses wore Renaissance gowns, entirely out of keeping with Roman togas and short broad swords. In spite of Shakespeare's direct evidence to the fact that in *Twelfth Night*, Maria must be dressed so much like Olivia that Viola seeing them together cannot pick the "lady of the house," I have seen

Maria garbed almost like a maid-servant. In fact, in one production, the first scene in which Maria appears was set near the kitchen, and she was engaged in rolling out dough, from which she later sportively puffed the flour into Sir Andrew Aguecheek's face!

All the foregoing instances are from professional productions which fact makes them all the more disturbing, as they may have served as wrong models to students, performers, and directors of Shakespeare's plays.

Amateurs, with all their intended care for details, allow unbelievable defects to persist. In *The Playboy of the Western World* I do not believe that Christy should dress for the donkey race in a brilliant silk striped jockey suit. True, Synge writes a line which may be so interpreted. I did not see the Abbey Players present this in America, so I cannot quote them as authority. But I don't believe that in the district suggested by that play there would be a professional jockey's suit for a stranger. Puttees might be borrowed, and perhaps a different shirt. The adoring girls might decorate it with nose-gays and ribbons. But I believe the character should remain in the picture of Ireland, and not look like the hero of *The Kentucky Derby*. In a play from the Hungarian, a crowd of neighbors rush into a house after an early morning tragedy. The director probably told the performers to go to the local costumer's to get some Hungarian costumes. They did. Aroused from their beds, they rushed to their neighbor's home, and stood in the increasing light of early morning, dressed in brilliant colors, brightly embroidered shawls and headdresses, looking like figures from a music box or members of a musical comedy

chorus. They should have donned old petticoats, and wrapped dark shawls around their shoulders and heads; the men should have worn half-laced boots, or slippers, shirts should have hung out and flapped open, hair should have been unkempt. There was no fitness in a single suit or dress.

Photographs of an all-girl cast in *Twelfth Night* show Maria dressed correctly enough so far as her gown is concerned but beneath her skirt show modern heavy high walking boots. In the same cast Sir Andrew Aguecheek wears a well-made, perfectly fitting suit, but his (her) feet are encased in a modern pair of girl's pumps. Both Viola and Sebastian are dressed too effeminately to be acceptable to the audience. All the other characters are well groomed, except that the girls' hair has made their heads so large that the plumed hats do not sit upon them properly or safely.

Besides the picturesqueness of the past a director may include the color of the distant. Every land has its national garb which has found its place in drama. Japanese and Chinese plays seemed to have disappeared from both professional and amateur stages. Just now they are back again. *The Mikado* is delighting thousands and *The Lady of the Lamp* carried on the influence spread by *The Willow Tree*, *The Son Daughter*, and *East Is West*. Amateurs have always liked the settings and costumes of the flowery kingdoms, but the phenomenal impressiveness of *Bushido* under all its titles—*Matsuo* and *The Pine Tree*—has emboldened them to give rein to that enthusiasm.

Looking in the other direction we can cite long lists of



plays influencing a different oriental style of costuming. It is not easy to ascribe definite beginnings for such introductions or repetitions, but I believe this phase of costuming came to us first in *Sumurum*. The more gorgeously spectacular *Chu Chin Chow*, *Aphrodite*, *Mecca*, and *Afgar* have continued it. Amateurs swayed by all the glorious sensuousness of such color have expressed it in the always-popular fantasies and romances of Lord Dunsany.

For a long time Greek plays were garbed more or less alike. If color were used it was likely to be some pale or pastel shade; but white was almost general, at least for women's draperies. Then there seemed to be a sudden change from the subdued and the quiet to the loud and the garish. Old Greek stories were treated in a fairly irreverent manner for comic effect, partly, I should say, by imitation of French methods. Then the great classic tragedies were approached, not from the viewpoint of literary masterpieces above all human interest, but as dramas written to be acted and embodying stories of human relations. Independent producers in America, in England, in Central Europe, revolutionized completely the method of producing Greek material. Hoffmanstal rewrote the *Electra*, Strauss set it to music, and Reinhardt applied "circus" methods to its staging. Ample space and large audiences in the open-air stadiums and theaters called for stronger treatment than had been dared, and the amazing discovery was made that classic tragedy need not appeal only to antiquarian scholars. Like all good drama it can be made universally appealing.

Related as closely to costuming as costuming is related

to characterization is make-up. Like costuming it depends in its nature almost entirely upon lighting. Change the lighting of a scene and every make-up on stage will appear different. When amber replaced white light on the professional stage actors had to learn to apply and combine colors differently to secure the same effects as before. The varying intensity of light in different theaters will emphasize or kill certain kinds of make-up. The dazzling brightness of the large commercial stage will not serve as a test of facial change upon the smaller stage of the intimate theater. Distance between actor and spectator is so reduced in little theaters that make-up must be laid on with a sparing and delicate hand. Even in intelligent commercial productions there is a great deal less make-up now than there was formerly. Moderation of effect in acting has induced moderation in character advertising—as the change of features might be designated. Just as the villain no longer always wears patent leather shoes and flicks his cigarette ashes about the carpet, so no longer does he have to display a silky black mustache and a shifty eye. Add to all these reasons for change the fact that little theater audiences are “in the know” and it becomes apparent that more refined and successful results are demanded of make-up.

The essential principles and rudimentary effects are so simple that a beholder wonders at many of the faces he sees. In spite of the opportunity to observe good, bad, and indifferent facial decorations on the street, in the cars, and across dinner-tables, many amateur actresses make glaring blunders when they appear at dress rehearsal. Red

—because they consider it the prime beautifier—is used too lavishly. It mounts too high, or spreads too low. Or it is not blended properly, so that it looks no more like “beauty truly blent, whose red and white Nature’s own sweet and cunning hand laid on” than are the perfect circles painted on doll’s faces like the glow of healthy children. Discussions of exactly how to secure effects in make-up do not fall within the scope of this book, but comment on some of the crudities does. Many an actress acting on habitual practice “powders her nose” just before she enters the scene, with the disconcerting result that the intensified brightness strikes the high light on her nose making it appear like nothing in the world so much as a piece of white dough or putty. Her chin may show the same ghastly prominence. Then there are others, perhaps they are the same, who spread red over the entire lip. Few mouths can stand this heavy outlining across their full width, and then appear small and winning in speech. The misuse of black is almost as frequent. Eyes are made to appear like burnt holes in sheets. I wonder if in a little theater it is ever necessary, except for character parts, to put melted cosmetic on the eye-lashes, making each hair like a ball tipped spoke, or to color the entire upper lid dark blue so that every time it is lowered it looks diseased.

In earlier times make-up hardened into set forms for regularly recognized types of play characters. Heavy accents were placed upon every trait to convey a classification to an audience. There are still reminiscences of this indicated by photographs of some little theater productions, in the Britisher with the long mustache and the



Frenchman with the goatee. Modern producers have passed from such crude labels. Today in the appearance of an actor, the keynote is characterization, not type; personality, not the part. The worst violation of such a consideration which I have ever seen was the first entrance of Christy in *The Playboy of the Western World*. Synge describes him as "very tired and frightened and dirty," but this actor appeared with a beautiful and fresh juvenile make-up. He was the leading man, and he refused point-blank to appear with any other face. Naturally this killed any chance for the exaggeration in the play of the power of his deed to arouse the admiration of the people. His good looks would have done that at the first glance. The wrong make-up spoiled both the part and the characterization.

To secure models for imitation the best method is to observe carefully all the faces you see about you. Physiognomy is not an exact science, so definite features do not in reality indicate disposition and character. But we have come to associate certain physical traits with mental or temperamental characteristics, and a recognition of this—not a slavish adherence to it—is usually a help in acting. It is impossible to delineate much of a person's character by means of his features; it is best to have make-up reinforce the physical attributes, merely suggesting probable disposition, then depend upon the acting for the projection of the person's real character.

Naturally men need and use make-up on the stage less frequently and less consistently than women. Unless the rôle requires a radical change in age or appearance a man may be able by his stage business and acting to simulate



the difference. If his features are pliable and his powers of facial control well developed he may succeed to a surprising degree. The one detail over which he can never exercise modifying control to a large extent is the hair on his head and face. If a character in a play has to be whiskered he must either start months in advance to grow the hirsute appendage—a proof of devotion to art which no amateur working every day could attempt—or he must stick the bushy mass on with spirit gum. Beards and mustaches are not very difficult to make look real if they are properly blended. Notice the hair upon any man's face and you will see plainly how it varies in color and thickness. Practically never—except when dyed—are hair and beard or mustache of exactly the same shade. In securing this replication of natural difference lies the whole art and difficulty of this phase of make-up. More than the mustache the beard needs skilful manipulation for both shading and thickness. So few stage beards look as though they have grown upon the actor's face. The worst I have seen recently is the pair worn by the villain and the hero in the London production by Arthur Bouchier of *At the Villa Rose*. The latter's appearance in the disguise of the last act was as funny as intentional travesty. The disguise in real life would not have deceived any person.

Wigs under most conditions are likely to cause uneasiness on both sides of the footlights. An ideal condition would be to have among the acting group a man who would look almost exactly like the character to be presented and also able to best act that rôle. Then the use of most wigs could be abandoned. Worst of all are the bald domes or half

bald heads. The best fitting bald front will never tightly cling to the forehead of the amateur for whom it has been hired. The grease paint may bring the false and the real skin close together in color, and a few horizontal lines across both will make the yawning juncture look like a wrinkle, but there will still be the open space which no amount of coloring or drawing can entirely close. Fortunate is the company which has among its excellent actors a few young, middle-aged, and elderly men whose make-up is complete as soon as they take off their hats.

If a professional make-up man is hired his stock of paints, powders, and wigs will in all probability be better than the aggregate of the private possessions of the performers. When hiring is not feasible or desirable there may be one member whose skill or interest lies in such exercises. This work must be subjected to the inspection of the director exactly as the costuming. If he has his mind on all the details he will have given, long before the dress rehearsal, specifications of make-up for every character. He will dictate changes based upon observation of the performers made from the auditorium. To insure celerity every performer should put on his own make-up. He may have his own make-up box, or the organization may own a well-stocked one. To have every actor do everything for himself comes closest to professional practice, but when the result does not justify the responsibility there should be no hesitancy in insisting upon a surer and safer procedure. A mistaken make-up may be as false a note in a performance as a mistake in casting. It is one of the most disturbing of the petty annoyances of the theater. Practice will make perfect in



Photograph by Moffett

Plays by J. M. Barrie.

Above: *Quality Street*. Hathaway-Brown School, Cleveland. An all-girl cast.

Below: *Rosalind*. Hickox Studio Players, Chicago.



Photographs by Kaufmann Fabry Co.

The Hickox Studio Players, Chicago

Above: *The Storm*, by John Drinkwater.

Below: *Everybody's Husband*, by Gilbert Cannan.



this as in all things, but a few serious failures during the apprenticeship may be costly. It would be good for every amateur actor to take several lessons from a professional make-up artist, for there are tricks of ground colors, blending, shading, indicating age, eradicating features, emphasizing them, modifying them, which may be speedily learned. After the manual parts have been mastered the training can be pursued at practically all times. Every illustration the actor sees, every photograph he notices, every painting he observes, will contain models which he can photograph upon his imagination for later reproduction. Elsewhere in this book the remark of Sir Frank R. Benson describing one of the actor's essential abilities is quoted:—"he must be a human kodak." Nowhere is this so plainly true as in this matter of making-up.

While pictures will help him to fix certain marks, colors, lines in his mind, there is a wider and more fascinating field of observation for reproduction—human nature in all its myriad living forms around him. Let the actor study human beings continually, let him peruse every characterful countenance, let him analyze the reality of the faces and hands he sees, and then by successful reproduction and adaptation of them he will inject into his own impersonations an appearance of individual actualness.

## CHAPTER IX

### LIGHTING

IF a person has his own theater fully equipped he is able to make any experiments he pleases to secure novel effects of setting, costuming, and lighting—always provided, of course, that he has enough money to pay for all his failures, and time enough to experiment until he gets exactly what he wants. When we read the accounts by Mr. Belasco we are envious of the chance to try for weeks the working out of the best plan for showing the floating souls in the last act of *The Darling of the Gods*. We marvel at the capital which permitted discarding all the painted canvas which had been devised at first for the scene, and the substitution of hangings tinted by colored lights. What amateur organization can afford to do such things?

The amateur producer is always at a disadvantage of time, equipment, and money in such matters. Working upon a small stage, in cramped spaces, with few lighting facilities, for an audience predisposed to be over-critical, rehearsing at odd times persons otherwise regularly employed, for a few performances at most, is there any wonder that his effects are so far below his ideals? Should we not wonder that his results are as effective as they are?

With all the odds against him the amateur producer has made the most notable advances in aims and methods, and

produced the most arresting novelties in such matters as lighting.

It is almost axiomatic that no stage upon which amateur productions are offered is adequately equipped. If there are dimmers there are usually not enough for all circuits. If there are any they are usually the old-fashioned circular kind with few points of contact so that the lights jump up and down instead of increasing or diminishing evenly. An experimental electrician may even be forced to construct his own dimmers of earthenware crocks containing a salt solution into which he lowers one end of the wire to carry the full current when it reaches the other at the bottom of the solution. But light from these is uncertain in intensity, the apparatus is cumbersome, the operator has to be reliable.

At times, the opposite of the foregoing is true. The lighting equipment of a small theater may be quite complete—but so complicated that only one or two persons ever master its intricacies well enough to use it satisfactorily.

No one can lay down absolutely just what the lighting equipment of any amateur stage should be, for at any time some play or spectacle may require a detail quite unforeseen but which the electrician must be able to provide. The one great feature of the lighting arrangements as of all other stage appliances should be adaptability. It is possible, however, to suggest certain desirable things upon which to base a beginning of satisfactory lighting.

There should be footlights. Whether they should always be used is another matter. But they should be provided, for it is as ridiculous to say they should never be used as

it is to insist that they should be used for every performance. The footlights should be on as many different circuits as possible, each with its separate switch and if possible, its separate dimmer. Three different colors—red, blue, amber—are the best combination. If each of these can be split so that one half of each section to the right and left of stage center can be manipulated separately, there will be chance for more effects, but this last is not an essential. When blue lights are used in connection with others, about twice as many blue bulbs are required as of each of the other colors. White lights have almost entirely disappeared from the modern theater, yet in some cases they may be better than amber. In such uses bulbs can be replaced in the sockets for special effects.

The placing of footlights is a very important matter. I know of several auditoriums in which because of some transient interest in pageantry, or some scheme to link the audience with the performers, permanent aprons or fore-stages were built and permanent footlights placed along the front edge, yards away from the line of the proscenium opening. The result of this is that when a performer steps into this fore-space, he is badly lighted by too strong a glow from the floor—an entirely unnatural source of strong light. To counteract this glaring error of construction, in one auditorium temporary wooden frames are erected at the rear of the first floor from which high power nitrogen bulbs with reflectors looking like dishpans project strong glares upon the stage. This makeshift imitation of the use of the spot or flood light in the professional theater is never satisfactory, for spectators stumble against these unsightly



contraptions, they are not easily controlled, and worst of all, they cast strong glares upon the backs of the occupants of at least the first ten rows of seats. This forestage also draws amateur actors out from the picture, for scenery has to be set behind the proscenium arch only. There is always a different intensity from the lights behind the upper edge of the proscenium arch, so that different parts of the stage show, for no reason, different intensities of lighting. The addition of the forestage in this instance has practically ruined the stage.

In the second hall—a high school auditorium—the matter has been more easily remedied. When the forestage is used the moveable footlights are placed along its front edge. To neutralize the light from them a corresponding set—alike in color, number, switches—was placed upon the stage side of a deep ceiling beam extending straight across the house, far above the heads of the audience. By careful adjusting of reflectors and shades the light from this border strikes the stage just behind the footlights. The various series are controlled from the same switchboard. When the forestage is not used the footlights extend across it not at its edge, but just in front of the curtain line. Then their light is matched, as is usual, from the first border, and the house ceiling beam row is not used at all.

The footlights of the first hall are permanent ones sunk in a curving trough, so that modifications cannot be employed. Fixity of equipment has reduced the utility of that stage.

Unless the footlights are built with professional design and connections amateur stages are better off with moveable

sets. These may be of many different designs. Troughs may be covered by board sections, making the whole stage level. Other devices swing on pivots, so that the lights turn down and the boards swing into place as flooring. In designing any special frames or reflectors remember that more light comes from the sides of an incandescent bulb than from the round end. If you are going to place footlights upon the stage floor consider the line of vision from the front rows. If the front of your stage descends to the house floor in a series of three or four steps, you can place your footlights upon the top step. Make it possible to introduce corrections before finally installing. For instance, beware of back reflection into the auditorium from the vertical step. This would light the ceiling near the stage. It might cast shadows on the lower parts of the performers' bodies. Close in the ends of such footlights so that the side walls are not illuminated. You will be amazed at how much light can filter around corners.

When amateurs can discuss nothing else about their plays they can always raise the question, "foots or no foots?" Those who insist upon footlights are always informed by their opponents that Mr. Belasco discarded them long ago, and that recently Mr. Hopkins has been using an overhead system. To this the defenders of footlights will answer quite truthfully that many plays of the former producer are most inappropriately lighted, and that the system of the latter has received a great deal of criticism from intelligent theater-goers. Its most dangerous disadvantage is that actors will develop under it an artificial pose, for with

light coming from above an actor is aware that his nose and lips throw triangular shadows upon his face as they never do in natural lighting outdoors or in a room. To counteract this, members of companies playing in several theaters in New York have fallen into the trick of tilting their heads back to catch better lighting.

In October, 1920, a critic in a New York periodical wrote these pertinent sentences:—"It is in order, though, to ask where Mr. Belasco, usually so correct in matters of lighting detail, ever saw moonlight so vivid that it outshone the strong illumination of a brilliantly lighted drawing-room. It's all right for Mr. Arthur Hopkins to over-rule natural laws in lighting effects but we don't often see Mr. Belasco working miracles of that sort. The latter usually has some logical reason or excuse for his stage surprises in lighting."—Mr. Metcalf in *Judge*.

An amateur producer will always try to correct the inconsistencies of the faddist by the cold test of actuality. The author of an excellent book on play production admitted to me that a certain lighting effect which he praised enthusiastically he had never seen on the stage; he had based his opinions upon a black and white sketch made by the artists. This is no proof that the acted detail was at all like the artists' preliminary conception. Very likely when this was tried in actual performance—if it ever was—changes of all kinds were made before the effect was satisfactory. If you have participated in many dress rehearsals—in most cases the only ones in which amateurs use the stage where their performance is to be given—you are aware

of how much is still to be arranged before the opening night. Frequently the entire lighting scheme is revised between the two dates.

For a long time Mr. Bassett Jones, a well-known authority on all kinds of lighting, was quoted as the final force in the banishment of footlights, but he has declared that they are useful, often necessary, so all who followed his lead, will now have to admit their value.

For certain plays, then, footlights are necessary. With them there must be side lights or strip lights, and border lights above. Two or three sets of border lights may be necessary to cover the stage depth. This scheme does not mean that the entire stage will be lighted equally from all points, for by varying the intensity, effects of naturalness may be reproduced. One lighting expert has made the keen suggestion that this same natural appearance of the persons on the stage may be heightened by placing at one side an amber light and at the other a blue one. This arrangement will cast slight shadows upon one side of the face exactly as we see in actual life. In a room light strikes the face from definite sources. Outdoors all lighting comes from level sun rays. If on the stage the shadows are not too pronounced the realistic aspect of the acting will be enhanced.

Strip lights at the sides and the front row of border lights are intended to neutralize the shadows cast upward by the footlights. In an interior with a ceiling upon it the front border light is the only one that can be utilized, so it must equal in intensity the footlights. When exterior sets are used this light from the front would cast shadows of



every profile of foliage, every leg-drop, every tree form. The other border lights are then used behind each such section. In the rear the back-drop or cyclorama is lighted from above by the last border, or if the row of lights can be masked and no character has to pass behind them, by strips of lights upon the floor.

Further intensification of lighting is usual in all theaters. The spot or flood thrown from the gallery, is shown at its crudest in the vaudeville house. In the gorgeous *Chu Chin Chow* a large battery of lights, operated artistically from the front of the balcony, enhanced many of the scenes. The Little Theater of New York has dropping sections of the ceiling from which rays can be directed upon the stage. In order to secure wider diffusion of light to produce a more agreeable mellowness some little theaters have wrought-iron brackets projecting into the house from each side of the stage opening. Upon these are hung lanterns, or globes, or some other decorative unit to spread light more widely than the front border can. While some directors suggest the wider use of the auditorium to supplement stage lighting, most directors try to confine lighting to the stage proper, for any extended use of the darkened house is nothing but a return to the early gallery spot, no matter how much modified it may be.

In modern, realistic plays there are employed all kinds of devices to bring out facial expression. Many persons in the audience never know of their presence in the scene. Two men in *The Tabloid*, by Arthur Eckersley, had an important scene as they stood on opposite sides of a table above which hung a dome light. It was discovered that

while this single lighting unit gave exactly the concentrated effect desired in the otherwise dark room, it did not bring out for persons sitting in the audience the tense faces of the two men. A white globe was concealed in a pasteboard box behind a rack of books upon the table to throw a light up to the men's faces. A similar device is the placing of a light behind the foot of a bed to fall upon the heroine's face as she sits up against the pillows. These are simple cases, of course, but other tricks are as usual. When young Baxter of *Seventeen* stood before the mirror to note his appearance in his father's dress suit, few people realized that an extra amount of light from a spotlight concealed among the foots was turned upon him. So in many so-called realistic productions there are heightening effects. Mrs. Fiske may remark that she did not know for a long time the meaning of the phrase "A little more of the baby on the King," but every other stage performer knows it and isn't happy until he gets it, whether it be really a baby-spot or a full-sized one.

As amateurs deal largely with unusual plays, so they have more opportunities for unusual lighting effects than professionals. All of us have heard of the wonderful effects secured by simple means. Maurice Brown always declared that the lighting system of his Chicago Little Theater was extremely simple. Moon rays have been cast across stages from a bicycle lantern covered with green tissue paper. Improvised dimmers have been already mentioned.

With the propensity to romantic, costume, fantastic productions has come the most significant opportunity of amateur stage decorators. A large number of treatises

offer help to the beginning experimenter. If he has the equipment, the material, the time, he can work out combinations for himself.

The supernatural offers him his first chance. In combination with the real he has merely to resort to the principle of contrast.

At one time, undoubtedly, a person, if asked to mention the color which connoted the other world, would have mentioned red. While this is fairly common in people's minds, there is a deeper response to the suggestion of the unreality of green. This color has come to be used almost always to aid the appearance of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, so the amateur director can take a lesson from this. If he is producing Lord Dunsany's *A Night at an Inn* how shall he evoke the proper awesomeness at the entrance of the dread god Klesh?

First of all, to be most arresting, he should enter at the rear. With night outside the Inn it should be easy to have the stage rather darkened. To heighten the supernatural have the door opened by unseen hands to disclose Klesh standing there in a ghastly green light. This can be thrown upon him from a baby-spot suspended just above the doorway, focussed upon him. As he advances slowly into the room, another baby-spot, already hung in the first border and carefully tested before the play began, should be turned upon the upper part of his body. Any shadow should be neutralized. The effect can be further emphasized by the use of phosphorescent paint upon parts of the face and costume. Another method of securing the same effect would be to arrange a headdress projecting somewhat over the face. Under this conceal a small green electric light bulb

connected with a small storage battery concealed in the actor's costume. This glow cast downward will give the proper ghoulish tint. The spot of light cast upon the floor will not be too distracting to the spectators. It may even give the impression that the figure moves about in his own supernatural glow.

In a full-length play lighting is likely to be as important as properties. In combination with the scenery it is almost as significant as the play and the acting. Long before the full drama is placed upon the stage for its last rehearsals, the director should hand to the lighting manipulators his specifications, or he should discuss with them exactly what he should like to have. The technicians will then be able to inform him whether he may have all he wants exactly as he has described it. These technical workers, knowing the equipment and its capabilities and flexibility better than he does, will probably suggest modifications, substitutes, and omissions, until a practicable working compromise is evolved. The craftsman detailed to manipulate the lights and all his assistants should know the play from seeing it rehearsed rather than from reading the script. This visualization will—if they be artistically interested—give them ideas for the best reinforcing effects. Their suggestions should always be tried unless they are manifestly impossible of realization or inconsistent with the ideas of the play already instilled and crystallized. Enthusiasts should be curbed until they accept their parts as contributory, not leading ones. If an experimenter is allowed to experiment too long he will become an improviser and stop the play while he ecstatically runs the whole gamut of the lighting





Photograph by White



Above: *The Aulis Difficulty*, by Maurice Baring. Yale Dramatic Association.  
Below: *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*, by G. Bernard Shaw. The Play-House, Lake Forest.



Photograph by Arthur Kales

*The Lady with the Dagger*, by Arthur Schnitzler. Community Theater, Hollywood. Designed by James Mitchell Leisen.

range. Before the dress rehearsal, the lighting should be decided upon, the connections should be made, the lights placed, the cues memorized, the changes known. Then a dress rehearsal should do more to smooth a performance than it so frequently does. Most dress rehearsals seem to ruffle people. Actors reach home at two in the morning, while members of the productions committee stay up all night to finish scenery and run wires. This should be corrected, and directors should insist upon an expedition and facilitation of all the mechanical aids to good productions. It is a ridiculous waste of time to have the cast dressed and made-up to start a dress rehearsal at half past seven, and find the electrician of the group just starting to screw colored bulbs into the sockets. If everything had been placed and connected before dinner, there could be a half-hour's experimentation before rehearsal, then no stops need be made during the action to repeat lighting changes. Dress rehearsals are only too frequently more likely to be scenery and lighting rehearsals.

A worse kind of late preparation occurs when the lighting expert and the director change their minds *after* the dress rehearsal. This is fatal when it should be tried with the action itself, as there is no chance to work it out except in the actual performance. Worse still is the last minute change when everything is ready for the performance to begin. Once I sat in an audience gathered to see three one-act plays. Between the second and third the wait stretched to thirty minutes. From behind the curtains came muffled sounds of moving objects and persons. Then there appeared in the rear of the house the head of the

productions committee. When spectators asked if the curtain would open soon they were told no one knew. Author and stage manager had decided to change the lighting and were frantically moving lights about, trying color mediums, rearranging the actors, and in general raising such last-minute confusion that others were deserting the stage in disgust and despair. Neither of the two men seemed to feel any responsibility to the waiting, anxious audience, who should have keenly resented such theatrical mismanagement and discourteous forgetfulness. At times like this—and every amateur organization experiences them—there should be a beneficent tyrant whose word is law. He should order a rapid arrangement, banish the vacillating temperaments from the stage, call “places” to the actors, and give the signal for the curtain.

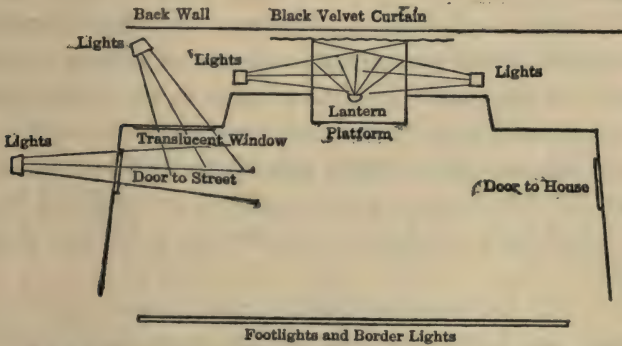
A person who cannot make up his mind in advance should never be entrusted with the staging of amateur plays.

The first time a director studies a play he may make indications of the lighting. How to carry these out will be settled later in conference with his electrical staff.

A great favorite with skilled amateurs is *The Chinese Lantern* by Laurence Housman. It gives so much chance for beauty of lighting that it is worth studying for that alone. The three acts take place in the studio of a Chinese artist. This requires an interior with doors, windows, easels, stools, pictures. Only one unusual feature is required by the play. This is a large picture showing a garden, and in the foreground a hanging lantern, a mandolin, and a jar with blossoms. At several points in the play this picture glows with unnatural light, and in it appears the old master



who painted it, to utter warning and advice to two of the characters. So far all this is quite easy to construct. But—and this demands ingenuity for its successful accomplishment—into that picture in Act II walks and disappears a young artist, and from it in Act III he returns to claim his sweetheart just before she is married to the fat clown whose soul is set on being a grocer.



Lighting arrangement for *The Chinese Lantern*. See illustration for the stage setting.

Placed about the stage and hanging from the ceilings might be beautiful Chinese lanterns, except that they will not serve for the brightness of full day in which the play opens and ends. Footlights and borders of amber should bathe the colorful stage. Act II opens after sunset. Through the translucent paper covering of the windows a red glow could be thrown from a flood, or a bunch of bulbs. This would have to be reinforced by strong red from footlights and borders. As the slave girl goes about stage lighting the lanterns (by turning the buttons of the electric

lights in them) the red must be dimmed. Gradually the amber in footlights and borders would replace the red, although a faint tint might be allowed to play upon the window. A little later the drudge is ordered to put out all the lights. If he turns out a few in the lanterns the audience will be prepared for a gradual darkening which is needed for the supernatural effect to be operated with the painting a few minutes later. When the boy who yearns to be an artist is discovered copying the old masterpiece his sketch is torn to fragments. As he lies sobbing on the floor, the lantern in the picture begins to glow, disclosing the great old painter who stretches out his hand and draws the youth into the painting, where both figures disappear. When all the characters rush in and find him vanished they of course light the lanterns, so there is a brilliant stage again.

Act III discloses the studio before dawn. Just the merest dim light from a single bulb in the border would be enough to show the slave-girl asleep on the floor. The first person who enters carries a lantern. It should throw enough light to cover this first part. A later character orders the door opened. Through it should streak the pale light of dawn, reinforced slightly from the front and above. It is again in this dim light that the picture begins to glow and from it steps the former drudge, now resplendent in festal robes. As he and the little slave-girl—really the bearer of a charm to make her husband a great artist—declare their love, the red glow of morning bathes the windows and pours through the door. Again this should be reinforced by the other lights, but not too strongly. Then

as the action progresses this red glow is replaced by the amber of bright daylight—but not too quickly—and so the play ends in the brightness with which it began.

The manipulation of the picture would be extremely easy were it not for the requirement of having a character actually step into it and step from it later. If its only mystery were the appearance of its painter in its depths that would be easy. A picture built up of its details and covered with gauze would serve that illusion nicely. The actor, as the old artist, could step from behind some covering foliage. Or if the picture were painted on the gauze, then reproduced on the background, a few lights turned on behind the gauze would bring the standing figure into view. But entrances and exits preclude any gauze covering.

In one amateur production this was quite simply arranged, yet it drew spontaneous applause from audiences of thousands every time it was repeated.

The tone of the studio walls was tan in panels framed in black. In the center of the rear wall was set an open arch some six by seven feet. Behind it about three feet away were hung black velvet curtains. A platform was covered with a dark red rug. Upon this were placed a couple of stools, a tall brilliantly colored jar containing several sprays of pink blossoms, and a mandolin. A lattice work railing painted white set up at the rear of the platform threw all these details into high relief in the foreground of the supposed painting. Across the velvet curtain was pinned a cut-out paper tree branch painted in rather flat tones. Its foliage dropped and mounted about the black background, which appeared yards away. The lantern

which hung at the top of the painting was only half a lantern masking an electric bulb which illuminated the entire upper center of the painting at the proper time. On each side of this built-up painting was a strip of six incandescent lights, the lower two red, the upper four white. These also were turned on only at the proper time. Placed as it was, the furthest thing on the stage from the footlights, continually detracted from by the lines, brilliant costumes, and movements of the actors, this "painting" actually appeared to be one. Just before the old master's appearance, without the audience's being clearly aware of it, the regular stage was darkened as much as possible. At its darkest the old artist slipped sideways into his position. Then, as there were no dimmers on the side strips, two boys, carefully alternating, screwed in the lowest red globes, then those above them, until finally the bulb in the lantern above the opening was turned on, and the artist stood in brilliant view. The entire picture glowed, of course, by contrast with its previous lighting. For the disappearance of the character the process was reversed. There was no hurry about it, and the audience was not startled. The change took place before their very eyes, only they could not see, nor could they puzzle out exactly, how it was done.

If you keep your eyes open for such details even when you are most interested in the story of a drama, you will notice a great deal of good lighting, and some astoundingly bad lighting. The most laughable is the way the footlights jump up *after* the butler has turned the light switch in the wall, and has *taken his hand away*. This can be so simply



remedied that it is a silly error. He should hold his hand on the button until the lights have been turned up at the switch-board. The same rule applies to all kinds of changed lighting caused by the characters in the scene.

Of course, opera has always had its ridiculous practices, and always will have, I suppose, yet it was somewhat of a shock to see in the otherwise excellently managed production of *L'Oracolo* a glaring fault of lighting. The scene is laid in Hatchet Alley of the San Francisco Chinese quarter. Borders to mask the space above were cleverly devised to represent lines of clothes on ropes. At one side of the stage were a couple of stores, while the other was taken up by the opium den of the villain. Across the stage rear was erected a long piece of scenery representing several tumble down two-storied houses. The lighting was entirely satisfactory and realistic through the early part of the action—so satisfactory and agreeable that a spectator was not even conscious of it. Just before the heroine made her first appearance, an Italian lamp-lighter crossed the stage and with his long stick turned out the street lamp. Quite appropriately the entire stage was darkened at once, and a corresponding hush fell over the audience. The shutters at one of the second story windows were slowly opened and the prima donna appeared. Then came the incongruous lighting. Full upon her was thrown a brilliant small amber light. There was no place on the stage from which such a strange sudden light could originate. As a matter of fact it was thrown from behind one of the house wings. Who ever saw a levelly directed yellow light in a dark night? The incongruity—designed, no doubt, to throw her

into high relief—threw her entirely out of the picture, and as she sang with the conventional gestures of all grand opera, her hands and arms cast grotesque shadows upon her face. When her aria was finished and she was about to close the shutters, the yellow light vanished as if by magic. The whole proceeding was so prominent in a modern exhibition of stagecraft as to call for more than passing comment.

If the prima donna's contract stipulates that she must be favored by a spot at her first appearance ingenuity should at least invent something more plausible and acceptable than a bald disregard of all common sense. It would be easy to bring in that patch of light, but naturally and artistically. For instance, just before the street lamp is turned out the stage could be bathed in light blue suggesting moonlight. A slight intensification of this would give a reasonable excuse for letting a slightly brighter ray strike upon those shutters *before* they are opened. Let the character move into the light; never make nature follow her around to "spot" her for a solo just at the proper moment. Another scheme, not quite so romantic in the circumstances, would be to have the room in which the heroine is, bathed in light. If the beams were thrown equally from above and from both sides and from points slightly in front of her, they would have lighted her face well enough to let her singing be heard. As she was singing in Italian, only the melody and quality mattered to the audience. She was not acting in any tense situation, so there was no need to emphasize her facial expression. In sum, there was no reason for this incongruous detail of lighting. If the explanation be given that dawn was com-

ing, that can be answered by saying that dawn does not come in single rays but in a broadly diffused glow. Nor does it disappear after a five minute séance at an opened window.

One of the greatest helps to the director is the scheme of painting with color. In this he actually tints uncolored or neutrally colored scenery and hangings with colored light. Such a scheme cannot be utilized for all kinds of plays, but skilfully employed it produces elements of beauty, which are artistic delights. The method requires delicacy of treatment, for it must be suggestive rather than garish. It also must not interfere with the proper lighting of the characters, nor must it be neutralized by this. Somewhat related to this is a scheme of planes of lights.

To produce such planes more than the usual borders of lights will be needed. Each should project its rays almost vertically downward. Shadows should be neutralized by strong rays from both right and left. I have seen some models—but never stages themselves—ingeniously devised with lights sunk in troughs, or concealed behind low platforms, or profiles, to produce similar planes of lights. These planes extending across stage parallel to the footlights may merely be planes of different intensities, or they may be planes of different colors. If the first—different intensities—they may be used in relation to the emotional phases of the action to emphasize it. If so used, many rehearsals will have to be conducted in this lighting, for characters will have to learn exactly where to stand. If different colors form the planes, the lighting will add to

the pictorial effect. Such a scheme—to give only one instance—might be followed for the first scene of *The Harlequinade* by Dion Calthrop and Granville Barker, representing the banks of the Styx. The back drop or cyclorama could be bathed in the coldest, most mysterious blue, with suggestions of vertical shafts of other colored lights, to indicate vast depths below. The rugged rock profiles and the bare trees might be colored brown and dead gray. Just in front of this there might be a pink section. Then as characters advanced through this the audience would get just a hint of that ruddiness which we all associate with the underworld. Near the front an amber zone would give the air of reality in which the philosopher, newly arrived from earth, might stand, and into which the deities might pass as they decide to leave the dwellings of the dead to come to this world. When Mercury appears brilliant rays from a baby spot-light should be thrown full upon him to emphasize this brilliance.

Amateurs have only begun to sound the possibilities of lighting. They are usually handicapped by lack of space, equipment, means. But they are making progress in spite of many drawbacks and mistakes.

A recently exploited field is the emphasis of dramatic action and emotional stress by a play of lights. Somewhat this same attempt has been made in connection with music, and one color symphony has been given in New York. It has not been so successful in musical combinations, perhaps because the sense of sight has never been associated with appreciative listening to music, and also because people are not agreed upon the correspondence of



certain tints to definite notes. In drama there has always been the association of ear and eye, so the artistic color manipulator does not have to weld together the two senses. Generations of attendance at performances have already done that for him. We laugh at the crude attempts to reinforce dramatic feeling by incidental music in anything except the most fantastic drama. We shout with derisive glee at "Eliza—crossing-the-ice" music, but we have not fused into drama all the assistance afforded by emotionalized lighting. Some producers have made attempts; some have achieved successes, others have perpetrated disheartening mistakes.

In a Greek tragedy suddenly to shift the color upon the stage from amber to red because the characters begin to discuss war is to jolt the sensibilities, rather than to reinforce them. It would be just as consistent to tinge every sentimental passage with violet or pink tints. Then, to heighten effects there must be an observance of that other essential principle—contrast. An art-director will do well to pause long enough to consider all possibilities before choosing one. Will the darkening effect of red be the best medium to accompany the effects of battle, murder, and sudden death? Might not the revealing coldness of full white sunlight do it better? Did Charles Rann Kennedy succeed with this intention at the conclusion of *The Terrible Meek*? Evidently, there must always be the appropriate adjustment of means to ends. While color is one of the most fascinating elements of a theatrical production to experiment with, it should be understood that its use must depend upon long and careful and appreciative experi-

mentation. Distance, shadows, basic color of scenery, costumes, movements of performers, feeling, situation, make-up; any single one of these may spoil the result of long calculated combinations. The general use of amber on the stage has changed making-up to look natural under the newer medium.

Even professional producers sometimes make glaring blunders in dealing with lighting matters affecting their performers. Upon a stage containing a large number of women one director threw a peculiar green light, turning his attractive looking company into a sickly, jaundiced hospital ward. A long list of such errors can be made by any observant playgoer. There are the countless scenes in which sunlight pours in at rear windows, yet all the shadows of persons are cast back into the teeth of the brilliant sunlight by the more brilliant footlights. There are the glowing fireplaces before which sentimental scenes are played, yet which never by any chance cast a shadow out into the room. There are the stormy pitch black nights which magically clear into the glorious light of day before you can say "Jack Robinson," as in the last act of *Miss Nelly of N'Orleans*. There are the elaborate center clusters in drawing rooms which never throw a shadow upon the floor, although nowhere on the stage is there the slightest indication of any other lights to neutralize them. Because of this, many designers of interiors use wall brackets placed so that they naturally destroy shadows. In fact, in most professional productions, all shadows are avoided as taints. One was used to good effect in the cell in *Justice* by Galsworthy, but this was on

a very small stage. There is a good reason behind this professional fear of them. Distances on the regular stage are so great that any shadow of a person swells to enormous size before it is cast upon a surface. The very attempt to secure a natural shadow would inject a gigantic spot detracting from the character itself. Lady Gregory in a letter to W. B. Yeats commented on exactly such a circumstance. Of a production of his play *The Shadowy Waters* she wrote that the only vexing part was a warrior's helmet, which bore immense horns. The black shadow thrown down from these, every time he moved, produced the impression that a black goat was going to lunge at him from the side of the ship. Only within restricted limits can visible shadows be allowed. The small stage of amateurs need not observe this rule as strictly. With its restricted size shadows bear more nearly the same relation to objects that they do in actualness. This gives to the little theater a chance for effects almost impossible upon larger scenes.

The risks attendant upon manipulation of lighting are omnipresent, but the exultation resulting from a telling stroke o'erweighs all the disappointments.

## CHAPTER X

### EXPERIMENTING

THE word "experimental" has come to be associated closely with all amateur acting organizations, but the term is quite as fittingly applied to most commercial producers. The fundamental principle of all dramatic production is experimentation. Every new play is an experiment. Naturally, as business managers are in theatrical enterprises for something different from pleasure and health, they try to reduce to its lowest degree the risk attendant upon such experimentation, and to increase the certainty of financial return by depending upon all that can be made stable in the theater. Every play is bound to be an experiment, a risk; therefore, concludes the regular metropolitan owner, let us get into its production many elements which are not experimental or risky. Let us use tried and sure performers who have proven that they can hold and interest large audiences; let us use in stage design, color, management, those methods which have always "worked" before; let us follow the line of least resistance in costumes and lighting; let us never startle the passive receptivity of patrons who come to theaters for the same kind of thing year after year, and who will be actively resentful if they do not find what they want.

Yet novelty will attract as well as monotony, and to its credit the regular theatrical world presents many signal



instances of daring and popular innovations. Arthur Hopkins was experimenting when he offered Gorky's *A Night's Lodging* and Benelli's *The Jest*; so was Granville Barker when he produced Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, so was Mr. Faversham when he arranged an all-star cast for *Getting Married*, so was Oscar Asche when he started *Chu Chin Chow*; so was Max Reinhardt when he conceived *Sumurum*; so was Walter Hampden when he began a series of extra matinées of *Hamlet* in an entirely new kind of adaptable scenery; so was John Drinkwater when he challenged the supposed general public indifference to history and offered in England a chronicle play dealing with an American president.

Amateurs have the immeasurable superiority because they can experiment more frequently, in more different ways and with more daring and successful originality. Making, usually, no pretense to competition with professional houses, striving not to attract *the* public but *a* public, having less money invested, being under no obligations of paying large dividends, never concerned with a play or a method for a long time; original, daring, spontaneous, and enthusiastic, they can make a score of unusual experiments to every one of the regular stage. When amateurs become signally successful with any one element of experimentation that detail becomes part of the regular equipment of the commercial theater.

Every worker with things theatrical has tucked back somewhere in his consciousness a few things he should like to do, or see done, a few definite ideas he should like to have carried out. And since in amateur groups the organ-

ization by committees usually checks or curbs autocratic rule and plan, he frequently envies those professional producers whose single autocratic word is law. In the next breath, however, he will admit readily enough, that if any man dependent upon public support were to carry out his own personal plans or ideas, he would land certainly in bankruptcy, perhaps also in a sanatorium. Reports do filter through at times of seemingly ideal arrangements in which the strangest plans are put into operation. If they are as far away as Florence or Moscow they have all the romantic charm of distance—and immunity from critical scrutiny.

Some desires are not beyond easy fulfilment and general response. I may be quite mistaken in this view, but I always conceive the audiences of little theaters as keenly interested in the materials and methods of productions as well as in the finished plays themselves. As the inevitable corollary of that premise I conceive that all little theater groups are continually advancing in all the elements of theatric art. Certainly with that gradual or accelerated change there goes some educating influence, or sharpening of critical acumen, a deepening, penetration of insight, or a widening sympathy of comprehension. A sensitive appreciation of this change in the audience has already been listed as one of the most desirable qualities of a director. And when some member of long standing laments the good old days when "we used to act in Maguire's studio before a lot of screens and think we were doing great things," one can merely agree with him, for he is right in his reminiscence. But if any stage setting *now* shows an

unwieldy bulk of mass, or if the dimmer jumps down too jerkily, that same elderly recounter of the good old times will be the loudest in demanding what the productions committee means by offering stuff which would not be tolerated even in the commercial theater.

The device of grouping a series of one-act plays around a single idea is one which should be easiest to realize and make acceptable in experiment. Some suggestions of this have been given already—the Washington Square Players gave a bill of comedies of different nationalities. It would be interesting to arrange a “lover” bill. It might be opened with *The Constant Lover* by St. John Hankin in as realistic a setting as the artists could devise. I do not believe this humorous dialogue gains by being surrounded by bizarre forests or Bakst back-drops. Its dainty charm is in its contrast between the reality of usual life and the outrageous logic of the lover. After this might be presented *The Magnanimous Lover* by St. John Ervine, set and acted in as realistic a manner as possible. If possible, it should be so acted as to bite deeply into the consciousness of the auditors as acid bites into an etcher’s plate. Having twice used realism of setting, the next should fling all usual appearances to the winds, for the designer should be directed to let his fancy construct whatever it would to surround *The Honorable Lover* by Roberto Bracco. Then the performers should be trained to breathless speed of action, and heightened exaggeration of type. The more bizarre these three elements of the performance could be made the better. But—and this is important for the idea—the costumes of the performers in this last should be

kept quite within the range of fashionable probability. While both surprise and exaggeration are legitimate means of comedy and humor, incongruity is a more potent one. Therefore in this play the incongruity would be heightened by keeping one factor constant to ordinary experience. I mention this especially here because I heard of one production of *Food* by William C. DeMille in which the tired business man whose wife takes from the safe their treasures—a cracker and four drops of milk was dressed somewhat in the extreme fashion of a futurist. He wore tan shoes, white spats, brown, narrow trousers, soft pink shirt and collar, light olive-green coat which was buttoned with one button at the waist and which was very tight in its fit and long and full in the skirt. His tie was soft green satin to match the green of his straw hat, while the most delicate shade of pink circled the hat. He wore his hair well marcelled; and he carried yellow gloves and yellow cane. His wife wore a mandarin coat of black taffeta covered with black jet and white glass beads worked in the most intricate fashions and patterns. Her trousers were of black taffeta with large full puffs and circled with bands of brilliants, between the puffs. Dainty black satin slippers and hose and a black headdress with much lace and many brilliants, completed her attire.

Such decoration may be picturesque, but I believe it does not help at all the idea of the satire. The average spectator seeing such fantastic costumes would say to himself, "Well, there's nothing funny about that play. If the day ever comes when sensible people dress like that, they will deserve to have no food."





Above: *The Locked Chest*, by John Masefield. The Little Theater, Denver.

Below: *The Bear*, by Anton Tchekoff. Stuyvesant Players, New York.



Photographs by J. Steinke and W. W. Weber

*Pan* in *Seven Shadow Plays*, by R. Hoerschelmann. Designed by Minna Horwitz. The Playhouse, Cleveland.

One member of a committee suggested that there be produced a three-act play which had failed on the professional stage because of its last act, to let the audience see and judge just what was wrong with the material. This would have been interesting for those persons studying play construction, but it was felt that to announce for performance a play already known as a failure only to get a negative response from the last part would be taxing the generous natures of the hundreds in the audience to the breaking point. Yet some such scheme could easily be carried into performance.

To provide an evening of contrast in stage decoration and acting a director might try to do what Evreinov—author of *The Theater of the Soul*—did at his Parody Theater in Petrograd. Because this playhouse is a “parody” theater and also because he could pierce the pretentiousness of so many impracticable reformers of the theater, this original author produced the first act of the best-known Russian comedy, *The Inspector-General* by Gogol, several times in one evening in the different styles of modern stage production. Two of the models he used were the Art Theater of Moscow, and the teachings of Gordon Craig. I believe it would be possible to hold an audience through an evening with a similar bill based on some familiar English or American play. Perhaps a scene from Shakespeare would do as well as anything else. It might be done with historical fidelity as far as that could be attained. It could be done after the scrappy barnstorming methods of thirty years ago. It might be done stylistically as were *Twelfth Night* and *A Midsummer Night's*

*Dream* by Granville Barker, or in a framed setting as were Mr. Hampden's *Hamlet*, Mr. Sothern's *Twelfth Night*, Mr. Barrymore's *Richard III*. This experiment would be attractive only, I believe, for extremely unsophisticated audiences or for those highly trained by theater attendance.

Whenever I hear that a dramatist has changed a play fundamentally I wish I could have seen both versions. For instance, I should like to have seen Booth Tarkington's *Poldekín* when the protagonist died in the last act, then again after the author had decided to let Mr. Arliss live. I should like to see the happy ending (made for Germany) of Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. In this Nora at the last moment is restrained by the thought of her children from leaving her home and husband. I should like to see Goethe's *Stella* with its different endings. In every performance of *Hamlet* I am never satisfied until I see whether the curtain is coming down on the Prince of Denmark dead upon the floor, seated upon the throne, or being borne out to the platform by the soldiers of Fortinbras. I was extremely interested, although keenly disappointed, at Eugene O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon* on the stage, with its omission from Act I of a long conversation between son and father, and its peculiar conclusion, so different from the published version.

Only under most unusual conditions could one produce a long play and give its two conclusions on the same evening. But somewhat the same impression may be made by showing the same or similar themes differently treated. When I first paged through Polti's thirty-six dramatic situations I wondered whether it would be possible to find



a few plays clearly illustrating different handlings of the same theme. The complications would be endless because seldom does any play, even a short one, deal with un-mixed motives. Then I learned of the inclusion in a single bill of three plays dealing with the same theme, the thirty-second situation, mistaken jealousy. Stated a little more comprehensively, the theme is the woman suspected unjustly. Julian Thompson has written three one-act plays dealing with this situation and the theme growing out of it. The first, *How Very Shocking*, is comedy; the second, *Alfeth* is tragedy, the third *The Warrior's Husband* is farce.

If a director felt that his audience had arrived at the level where it would be interested in acting above all else he might stage the following experiment. After a couple of evenings of "talky" modern plays, say by Oscar Wilde or G. Bernard Shaw or Galsworthy or Brieux, he could prepare for performance just before Christmas time some unusual pantomime. The accompanying music should prove a novelty, so should the stage sets, for they should be made as brilliant and picturesque as possible. The first of these, *Pierrot's Christmas* by Beissier and Monti should be offered as close to the holiday date as possible. In it all efforts should be concentrated on the homely sentiment of the story, the contrast of irate husband and tender-hearted wife, the appeal of helpless childhood and the melting of the old man's resentment. If the audience could stand two pantomimes, after its reception there should be announced the second offering, though an effort should be made to keep secret the fact that it too is purely panto-

mime. In some sections of this country, I believe, this would be possible, especially if the title last used in New York were given instead of the original one. This pantomime would be *Pierre the Prodigal*, which under its rightful name, *L'Enfant Prodigue*, enthralled our parents. Quite a different sort of pantomime, permitting more original treatment than either of the preceding—awakening interest because of its music also, is *The Box of Toys* by De Bussy, in three scenes. While the first of these is childlike and old-fashioned, the second is smart and risky, the third is angular and eccentric. One suits the Christmas spirit, the other seems like the proverbial fling with which most persons like to greet a New Year. Both are appeals to the eye and ear, and beautifully acted, as they should and could be done, the pair would constitute a welcome experiment in the little theater.

Having introduced long plays let us continue with the list of experiments. Every once in a half century some rumor starts that *The Silent Woman* by Ben Jonson is to reach the commercial stage. At once spring into life discussions as to Elizabethan settings or modern realism. It would be interesting to see whether such an old play with a reputation for cleverness can justify itself by production now. Therefore I should like to see this farce-comedy presented with all the care and equipment expended upon a contemporaneous play of the same class. The material should make its appeal on its intrinsic merit. There should be added no antiquarian interest from setting, or from a selected audience of college drama students. It should be tried before the regular little theater auditors. I believe a

careful presentation would be more than slightly interesting; I believe it would be entertaining, far more genuinely entertaining, by the way, than the revival of *Gammer Gurton's Needle*.

There is another division of Ben Jonson's output which has always attracted me. Once I fondly believed I was going to have my curiosity satisfied and my imagination stirred. At one of the incongruous programs devised in 1916 to celebrate the fame of Shakespeare, upon which as usual appeared nothing which the great dramatist wrote, was included one of Jonson's masques. I anticipated a delight for my ear and my eye as indicated by Jonson's own descriptions of his stage settings and changes.

The scene to this Masque was a high, steep, red cliff, advancing itself into the clouds. . . . Before which on the two sides were two pilasters, charged with spoils and trophies of Love and his Mother. . . . All which with the pillars, seemed to be of burnished gold, and embossed out of the metal. . . . At which with a loud and full music, the cliff parted in the midst, and discovered an illustrious concave, filled with an ample and glistering light, in which an artificial sphere was made of silver, eighteen feet in diameter, that turned perpetually. . . . Only the zodiac was of pure gold, in which the masquers, under the characters of the twelve signs, were placed.

What was offered was the delivery of the lines and some dances upon a flat greensward with never a sign of scenery. In fact, there was no masque attempted.

It might not be wise to choose this same masque, but

there are more than one to serve the end. Upon it there should be lavished every resource of modern knowledge to clothe the lines and situations appropriately, which in a masque, means elaborately. Just picture in your mind's eye the gorgeous stage changes allowable in such mythological material as Jonson worked in. If it were possible to have for this performance only a small audience, and the floor could be cleared for the final general dancing, the attempt might be made to induce every spectator to come dressed in a Jacobean court costume so that historical accuracy might be reproduced up to the last minute. Lacking that, several court gentlemen and ladies should be introduced upon the stage from the audience to complete the masque idea of a general dance.

Before leaving the Elizabethan period I should like to suggest Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* for experiment. I do not believe there would be much value in a production in the so-called (but not correctly called) Elizabethan manner. To a great extent this experimental production should depend for effect on lighting and scenery. The archaic should be minimized. The supernatural should be interpreted as closely as possible according to modern preconceptions likely shared by members of the audience. The *drama* should be emphasized, for I believe that behind the boldness of Marlowe's spiritual conceptions, the crudity of some of his theatric devices, and the beauty of his verse, there is effective drama which would come through.

When one speaks of poetic drama we naturally think of the Elizabethan period only. It is a fact that a few other ages produced worthy drama in great poetry, though few



of the plays ever reached the stage. Recently an exhibition of stage models included one designed for *The Cenci* by Shelley. My idea would not be to produce this play as this designer intends it—from a small raised platform with the audience all around it. There should be used the regular stage for which Shelley wrote the play. It could be excellently done. A great deal of the revolting horror of the story would be toned down by the romantic attractiveness of Beatrice, the patent villainy of her father, and the remoteness in time and place of the incidents. To insure its being received with sympathetic appreciation there should be a cultured and sophisticated audience.

Another tense play which should prove as interesting an experiment for other little theaters as it was for the 47 Workshop at Harvard is *Eyvind of the Hills* by Sigurjonsson. This unusual tragedy of so distant a land as Iceland begins in joy and animation, in merrymaking and crowds, and narrows as it increases in intensity and deepens in force until only two characters are left to face a slow, horrible death by freezing or starvation in a mountain blizzard. To the art director there would be the problem of devising novel stage pictures and convincing mechanical effects. To strike the correct note of unusualness in the buildings, for instance, without so overstressing it that attention would be diverted from the human crisis, would require a delicate solution of contending claims and lures. There is no need to emphasize the difficulty of the acting in such a play. Is there not the same difficulty in adequately acting an Ibsen tragedy? While every Ibsen story makes its primary appeal because of its universal elements,

do we not expect, almost demand, of the interpreters, some unusualness, some slight traces of a realistic reproduction of Scandinavian environment which shall continually build a frame, as it might be termed, around the picture? Would the more somber of the Ibsen series be quite as effective if the names of the persons were changed to ordinary American ones, if the furniture eschewed all the northern touches, and if the locale was naturalized? Some connotative flavor—too evanescent to grasp at all times, yet sensible as a contributing detail of value—would vanish from the drama. Because of the delicate adjustment of familiar and unfamiliar required to lull active resentment yet to arouse responsive curiosity, such a tragedy as this calls for intelligent experimentation. So likewise, though not to anything like the same degree, is there the experimental appeal in *Hadda Padda* by Kamban. This presents just these same elements as *Eyvind of the Hills*, only here the stage requirements are not for such incidental reinforcements to the acting as a mountain snow storm, but a seemingly impossible setting for the last act of mountain ledges overlooking a deep gully in the unseen depths of which the moving conclusion takes place. In both these the experimental lure is provided by the intriguing combination of realism—and for us in this country—romance.

The realistic phase of these two dramas links them with another play which has never been given quite enough chance by the professional theater. Its author, B. Macdonald Hastings, has written a few distinctive dramas. Contrary to the axiom of the commercial stage, that a play must have a feminine appeal, there are strong themes

based on the reactions of men. When *The New Sin* was tried first in America, the dictum was pronounced that a woman must be worked into the cast by some means. So the cast was changed and a woman's rôle was written in. An intelligent experimenting director might take that drama in its original all-men form, and by sincere, modern methods of acting and producing, develop it into a poignant illustration of the modern thesis play with a flash-back at sociological analysis. It is one of the best examples of the indeterminate ending ever penned. It is one of the most vivid expositions of the nut-cracker metaphor of Fate. It will repay from the production viewpoint any energy expended upon it; I believe, also that it will repay the audience in stimulating emotional as well as cerebral reaction.

Carrying the possibility of social or moral analysis further, seeking for ever a stronger thrill of the indignant revolt, a director might—he would be a hardy one—offer one production of *War* by Artzibascheff. Such an experiment would of necessity have to be linked with definite anti-militaristic propaganda. No acting organization merely providing dramatic material for its special audience could expect to weather such a terror without disaster. But what a success could be made of a public view to such a preaching just at a time, perhaps, when jingo spirit was beginning to rise. It would have to be at the very beginning, for delayed just a little too long it would either be as ineffective as was Mr. Galsworthy's *The Mob*, or like the hero of that anti-Boer-War document, it would only serve to madden the blood of the hysterical warriors.

The charge has often been made that exponents of the little theater idea have tended to become too serious. Many a well-intentioned plan has disintegrated because of a confounding of excellence with tragedy, a mistaken linking of impressiveness with gloom. Intellectual superiority is not always synonymous with Russian or Scandinavian or Greek tragedy. Comedy does not inevitably connote commonness. Read George Meredith's *Essay on Comedy and The Uses of the Comic Spirit* for the standard of civilization by means of its comic muse. There are two quite apparent reasons for the preponderance of lugubriousness over laughter in little playhouses. Good comedy is difficult to find, and once discovered, it is most difficult to act. After all, civilization is sophistication, and sophistication is suspicious.

For the sake of variety, if for no other reason, there must be light-heartedness in a season of drama. What are some of the things with which to experiment?

There is no inevitable congruous order of succession for a list of this kind, so I shall set them down in the degree of their uproarious extravagance. Assuming still that the little theater audience is rather more than less sophisticated I believe a good experimental novelty would be *Black-Eyed Susan* by Douglas Jerrold. It should be produced with absolute seriousness and innocence by the cast, and while the audience would rock and weep tears of delight at the old-fashioned "drammer," the actors should never once descend from their pedestals of ingenuous purity, nor should they fail to make the borders ring with their reverberate heroics. A few years ago I saw *The Still Alarm* acted by



firemen for a pension fund, but with its audience there were detractions from the fullest immersions of unrestrained delight. Rich, rare, and racy as that production was, I believe *Black-Eyed Susan* would be almost Aristophanic.

To appreciate the delicious logic of a *reductio ad absurdum* propaganda drama I do not believe that a high degree of cultural veneer is necessary. Therefore, all dramas of social analysis should not be reserved for selected audiences only. If the plot be quite clear in the laying down of its antecedent premises and flawless in the deductions made from them the most ordinary mind cannot escape the impression of their inevitable conclusion. Therefore, a director could count upon a hearty response if he offered *The Fountain* by George Calderon.

This excellent comedy with a purpose is as good drama as many of G. Bernard Shaw's plays. Among the qualities which make it suitable for little theaters are the single set, the small nucleus of a cast around which several extras may be grouped, the marked differentiation of characters, and the situations which almost carry themselves. Best of all is the underlying thought-provoking idea of the comedy. Intelligent laughter (see George Meredith again) should result in cogitation. The smiles and chuckles aroused by *The Fountain* will produce this result. In essence the plot is a mathematical demonstration of the silliness of a great deal of modern organized charity and uplift activity indulged in by enthusiastic sentimentalists egged on by well-meaning but shallow agitators. In hundreds of instances the sums spent by the organizers are assessed upon

the poor who in the swing of the circle are supposed to benefit from the manipulation of their own money by some one else. Being an effective dramatist Mr. Calderon does not pretend to remedy the practice. He holds his mirror up to nature, and grimly says, "This is what you are. Now, what are you going to do about it?"

Allen Upward, several years ago, issued in book form, a play called *Paradise Found*, in which, also with logical precision, is shown exactly what kind of world we should be living in if for a generation or so all the reforming and standardizing improvements of Mr. Shaw should be consistently carried into practice. For the best reception of this parody the audience should be steeped in as much of the Shavian philosophy as possible. They should have seen as many of the plays as could have been presented during several seasons, and they should be familiar with all the dramatic prefaces, so-called novels, articles, and interviews issued by the satirist of our age. Such preparation would put the listener on the alert for every reference and allusion to the laws advocated by the present-day critic. It would render more delicious every hit registered by every detail of Mr. Upward's tribute. Yet such complete familiarity would not be absolutely necessary. Any intelligent person would catch the buffoonery of a society in which, as the state has assumed all control over children, no one any longer has a name, but is known by a catalogued number only. Marriages are controlled by a department of the state. And political meetings are plainly—as today actually, though not admittedly—presided over by mechanical automata. Some directors may feel that the

scenic investiture and technical appliances required by this play render it unsuited to experiment; other directors will see in those very elements its chief fitness as experimental material.

With all the romanticism, picturesqueness, and novelty which may be added to the foregoing, they are all still within the realm of actuality and are strictly in the regular dramatic form. Let us see if our search for experimental material cannot be extended to include more strange aspects, more irregular forms. A good transition is afforded by some of the shorter plays of M. Maeterlinck, in which though the conversation and action appear to stand still, the thought itself advances to climaxes as moving as any physical demonstrations can ever be. So, too, some of the poetic dramas of W. B. Yeats provide the same kind of bridge from the evidently actual to the invisibly potent. Yet unsubstantial as are the soul planes of those strange plays, the characters do speak their own thoughts, do give expression to their fluctuating emotions. Does there exist a group of dramas in which, not only is the progress of thought the essence of the action, but the lines themselves cease to be the spoken deliveries of the persons?

The best approach to this small group of interesting experiments is through *Overtones* by Alice Gerstenberg. In this famous play are shown what all social beings really are, the overtones of their true selves. Only here, in company with the overtones, who express themselves in all ordinary social meetings, are shown the real natures of the two women, and under the social insincerities and vapid compliments of the overtones are spoken the bitter and

true sentiments of the essential persons. So many groups have already experimented interestedly and successfully with this that they should be able to pass on to other specimens. There are some dozen or so plays in which the delivered lines are not the speeches of the characters, but are merely their thoughts or opinions, delivered, not as spoken, but as caught fleeting through their consciousness, and as overheard by the omniscient audience. Unfortunately most of the dramas in this form are serious, so that it might be difficult to secure enough variety if many were included upon one bill. While the arrangement of an entire evening's offering would be the best kind of experiment with this class, some repaying results could be secured from occasional inclusion.

One of the most novel is *Grotesques* by Cloyd Head. Its drawback is that its idea is not clearly delineated, its lines do not crystallize what should be made clearest, so that attention must be centered upon the method of production. Originally it was conceived as a moving silhouetted design of white figures and costumes against a black background, marked by a definite restricting frame. Experimental production and design carried it beyond any point its lines and theme would have reached. Some of the *Vistas* by William Sharp might be considered capable of similar treatment. The only comic or satiric material of this form which I know is *The Artist* by H. L. Mencken. As originally published this consisted of the thoughts and half-conscious emotions of the janitor, the pianist, and the members of the audience—including the music, though not musical critics, during an afternoon concert. With lights



in the hall turned up, and only the janitor and soloist appearing on the stage, while all the other characters speak from their places in the audience, the effect is one of uncanny reality of meditations suddenly becoming audible. Another original theme treated in exactly the same method is *Orthodoxy* by Nina W. Putnam. For this I am afraid no satisfactory conditions could be secured for even rehearsal, but it is peculiar even if not practical for experimentation. By far the most pretentious and successful of attempts at unusual cast and locale is *The Theater of the Soul* by N. Evreinov, described by its author as a monodrama. Before the lowered curtain appears first The Professor. Upon a blackboard this prologue explains by means of algebraic formulas that any one person is really represented by the expression:—

$$M^1 + M^2 + M^3 = M, \text{ the entire personality.}$$

Having asserted that the seat of the soul of this personality is the human breast, he retires, and the drawn curtain shows the interior of the human soul. Against this background, in planes of varied lights are enacted the fleeting impressions, thoughts, reminiscences of a man in the few minutes before he commits suicide by shooting.

Beyond the limits suggested by the considerations included in this chapter I believe few authors have ventured. Yet even these limits, I venture to say, will soon seem restricted by the seekers after novelty of material and those facile innovators of bizarre methods in theater craft. Yet the physical structure of playhouses will prescribe some bounds. So, too, will the receptivity of audiences. Already there have been as many suggestions of

change in theater arts as there have been proposed amendments to the Constitution of the United States, but practicableness has squelched many. The Ubermarrionet demanded by one enthusiast as the only means of reforming all the evil of the contemporary theater has never materialized. The wailing lament of one designer that it was a pity the seats could not be taken out so that the spectators might walk about to see from all angles the shadows thrown upon his stage setting was allowing his overwrought pictorial sense to overwhelm his knowledge of what a theater really is.

Yet while we may smile at the ingenuousness of some of the extravagant theorizers we must accord due credit to the ingeniousness of the advancing practical experimentalists.



The Players, Ypsilanti

Above: *The Clod*, by Lewis Beach.

Below: *Love in a Kitchen*, an old French farce.  
Notice the same scenery in both plays.



Photograph by Paul Thompson

*Bernice*, by Susan Glaspell. Provincetown Theater, New York.



## CHAPTER XI

### EDUCATIONAL DRAMATICS

THE statement made in the first chapter of this book concerning the increased and always increasing interest in affairs dramatic needs no further exemplification than the rapid development of attention to all theatric arts in school and colleges. Nearly every high school does more than merely read and discuss classic masterpieces, scores of small colleges offer courses leading to fuller understanding of play production or active participation in it. A few universities have become renowned for the successful results secured in some special phase of study or creation. A few specialized schools of dramatic art have advanced to the front rank as producers of good drama in worthy manner. The term educational dramatics is so wide that it may serve to cover any interest even remotely associated with the actual house of dramatic energy—the theater. In some institutions it denotes merely an adaptation of the old-fashioned course in elocution. It may list a historical survey of the literary drama. It may advance to a discussion of acted literary drama, endeavoring, instead of cramming students' minds with the textual difficulties of the first two quartos of *Hamlet*, to show them exactly how the foils are exchanged in the fencing bout; or instead of discussing whether Portia's legal decision would hold in a court today, to indicate how the actress can deliver "The

quality of mercy" so that it will not sound like a school exercise. In some institutions the plastic, design, scenery, costume, aspects of drama are emphasized, with attendant success in productions of a restricted class of plays. Others, leaving aside all the foregoing possibilities, concentrate entirely on playwriting, so that these courses are really composition practice directed towards a definite, supposedly quickly lucrative investment.

The results are directly in line with the material considered. From such courses come actors, dancers, directors, scene designers, costume makers, playwrights, architects, and keenly interested versatile dilettanti. These last are not to be scorned or disregarded for from their growing number will be recruited the better class of amateur workers, and the nucleus of the intelligent audiences who will either help change the professional theater, or find elsewhere their continual stimulus in dramatic themes. Already in this country there are millions of them.

As the emphasis placed by different institutions varies, so the material considered, and the methods pursued, differ as widely as the locations of the schools. Except for the quite restricted purpose of playwriting for the professional market, for general culture no aspect of educational dramatics is a waste of time.

Many courses in schools avowedly devoted to acting begin with pantomime, but hardly any two follow the same method or utilize the same material. Of course, one of the first essentials of dramatic appearance is control of the body. This mastery may be called the first element of the actor's technique. One school—it always seemed



Photographs by Florence Hendershot

THE ARTS CLUB, Chicago. Plays by Kenneth Sawyer  
Goodman.

Above: *The Game of Chess.*

Below: *Dust of the Road.*



Photographs by Wooten-Moulton

THE CAROLINA PLAYMAKERS, University of North  
Carolina.

Above: *Dod Gast Ye Both*, by Hubert Heffner.

Below: *Peggy*, by Harold Williamson.

Both plays are based on material of the district.



to me that this plan was easy for instructors—assigned among its early appointments the reproduction before the class of some bit seen in real life. When this was presented in pantomime the instructor and class were to guess the emotions behind the actions and the situation being depicted. Add to these difficulties of required attainment that the scene should delineate character and present a point or reach a climax, and you will have some faint idea of the distraction experienced by the novitiates who roamed the streets of New York straining their eyes to see something they could reproduce. Make a list of all the possibilities which may occur—the railroad station, the subway, the elevated, the East Side, the steamship docks, the river boats, the restaurants, the cabarets, the moving picture houses, automobiles, building sites, engineering projects, the airplane—the surroundings are countless; but try to particularize some single event which might happen, and which might be effectively and clearly reproduced in pantomime, and you will appreciate the difficulty of this apparently innocent direction.

Even after you have found a bit of actual life, can you be sure the spectators will understand it? Can you make it plain to them? How many screen stories could you follow through all the changes without the captions?

Students who have experienced this search for actable material have described it as the most discouraging period of all their study.

Another method of employing a pantomimic beginning is to choose some play of marked nature, as one acted in a kitchen, an office, a restaurant, a camp, a trench, a prison,

upon a ship, or in some past time, as the French Revolution, the Civil War, the Roman Republic, an oriental festival. Then during the study of this play, the members of the class are required to present in pantomime, scenes suggested by its environment, its situations, its characters. The direct value of such preliminary exercises is that they contribute bits of good stage business to be incorporated later as the lines are delivered. Every director of amateurs who has tried to produce say a Molière comedy knows how much time must first be spent in training amateurs to walk like ladies and gentlemen, how to "throw themselves into their clothes," how to bow, and how to walk without scraping their feet. Or in a modern comedy the time used in showing them how to pretend to eat or to drink tea, or to talk in dumbshow, or to join a group, or to announce a caller, or to sit down gracefully, or to leave a room, or to use the telephone expeditiously, is almost endless.

Besides these realistic uses of pantomime there is a conventionalized historical system brought to the highest degree of perfection by the Italians and French. It is in French and Italian theaters that a spectator sees mimetic art raised to certainty of effect by means of stabilized devices. To groups of spectators long trained in the convention the results are unerringly illuminating, to the uninitiated the general impression may be correct, although many of the fine details are unperceived. It is like trying to understand the enthusiasm of a Spanish bull-fight mob when you do not know the custom of the award of the bull's ear. In a training course in England I stood fascinated by the beauty of poise and the grace of gesture of a

class of over forty men and women as they reproduced the formal gestures of the instructor. Riveting as the evolutions were, I must admit that if the phrases being interpreted had not been continually repeated, "Mademoiselle is beautiful; Monsieur is splendid," I might have thought some of the students were trying to indicate that some person had a moon face and that somebody else or the same person was stout around the waist. Many of the others were easier to apprehend as "Monsieur is rich, but I am broke," and "I love you! will you marry me?"

As the intended thoughts grew in subtlety and the situations became complicated by the inclusion of several characters I should have been totally mystified had not eyes and brain been aided by the names, dispositions, and relationships of the persons being represented, the reinforcing music, and the running comments and directions of the instructor.

With all its drawbacks and difficulties, some practice in pantomime is of inestimable value in educational dramatics designed to help acting interpretation, or sympathetic attendance in the theater.

If the course is not a long, intensified, or diversified one, this first part, the pantomime, may be omitted as a distinct topic, and the work begin with another, here the second. This may be termed improvisation. Notice that pantomime tends to become reproductive, that it is fixed and formal. Observe a few screen stories to realize the truth of this. Much more self-expression, self-development comes from this second dramatic element. It entails much more valuable brain exercise. While it must be based on observation

and delineation, it embodies many elements of creative ability. Sir Frank R. Benson once told me that a good actor must be a human kodak. This is a neat phrase, of course, but it covers only part of the equipment. Improvisation is a workable device for developing the others.

Situations in improvisation may be assigned by the instructor, chosen by the student, or built up by the class. Besides demanding that the acted scene and the delivered speeches must show characterization, that they should have some point, and that they should produce a climax or conclusion, there should be no restrictions of either material or method. Hints for securing these may be discussed at length. To secure point or climax or conclusion the device of planning backwards should be exemplified. This may be done by analyzing either a few actual scenes in plays, or suppositious circumstances suggested by observation. An entire class may depict variously the same theme. The following simple suggestions illustrate the plan.

You are sitting at a table or desk. The telephone rings. You pick up the receiver. A person at the other end invites you to dinner. Deliver your part of the conversation.

1. Speak in your own character.
2. Speak as a busy, quick-tempered old man in his disordered office.
3. Speak as a tired wife who hasn't had a relief for weeks from the drudgery of house-work.
4. Speak as a young *débutante* who has been entertained every day for weeks.
5. Speak as the office boy.



6. Speak as an over-polite foreigner.

7. Delineate some other kind of person.

As you deliver the dialogues suggested by the exercises try to make your speeches sound natural. Talk as real people talk. Make the remarks conversational, or colloquial. What things will make conversation realistic? In actual talk, people anticipate. Speakers do not wait for others to finish. They interrupt. They indicate opinions and impressions by facial expression and slight bodily movements. Tone changes as feelings change.

Try to make your remarks convey to the audience the circumstances surrounding the dialogue. Let the conversation make some point clear. Before you begin, determine in your own mind the characterization you intend to present. Discuss from all possible angles the following situation. A girl buys some fruit from the keeper of a stand at a street corner.

What kind of girl? Age? Manner of speaking? Courteous? Flippant? Well-bred? Slangy? Working girl? Visitor to town?

What kind of man? Age? American? Foreigner? From what country? Dialect? Disposition? Suspicious? Sympathetic?

Weather? Season of year? Do they talk about that? About themselves? Does the heat make her long for her home in the country? Does the cold make him think of his native Italy or Greece? Will her remarks change his short, gruff answers to interested questions about her home? Will his enthusiasm for his native land change her flippancy to interest in far-off romantic countries? How

would the last detail impress the change, if you decide to have one? Might he call her back and force her to take a gift? Might she deliver an impressive phrase, then dash away as though startled by her exhibition of sympathetic feeling?

These are mere suggestions. Two students might present the scene as indicated by these questions. Two others might show it as broadly comic, and end by having the girl—at a safe distance—triumphantly show that she had stolen a second fruit. That might give the fruit seller the cue to end in a tirade of almost inarticulate abuse, or he might stand in silence, expressing by his face the emotions surging over him. And his feeling need not be entirely anger, either. It might border on admiration for her amazing audacity, or pathetic helplessness, or comic despair, or determination to “get even” next time.

Before you attempt to present any of the following suggestive exercises you should consider every possibility carefully and decide definitely and consistently all the questions that may arise concerning every detail.

1. Have a man come into the room and try to induce the mistress of a house to have a telephone installed. Make the dialogue realistic and interesting.
2. Have a girl demonstrate a vacuum cleaner (or some other appliance) to the mistress of the house.
3. Have a man dictate a letter to a gum-chewing, fidgety, harumscarum stenographer.
4. Have this stenographer tell the telephone girl about this.
5. Show how a younger sister might talk at a baseball

or football game to her slightly older brother who was coerced into bringing her with him.

6. Show a fastidious woman at a dress goods counter, and the tired, but courteous clerk. Do not caricature, but try to give an air of reality to this.

7. Show how two young friends who have not seen each other for weeks might talk when they meet again.

8. A foreign woman speaking and understanding little English, with a ticket to Springfield, has by mistake boarded a through train which does not stop there. The conductor, a man, and woman try to explain to her what she must do.

9. Have three or more different pairs of students represent the girl and the fruit seller cited in the paragraphs preceding these exercises.

10. A young man takes a girl riding in a new automobile. Reproduce parts of the ride.

11. A woman in a car or coach has lost or misplaced her transfer or ticket. Give the conversation between her and the conductor.

12. Have various pairs of pupils reproduce the conversations of patrons of moving pictures.

The next step is logically to short scenes from long plays. In such cases delineation is to a great extent fixed by the dramatist. One would imagine that a modern playwright alive to the vagaries of individual producers and performers would leave nothing so important as characterization to appearance or chance. Yet there are always matters for individual decision. A striking one is this. The printed version of Lord Dunsany's *Fame and the Poet* contains no direction about the costume of the Lieutenant-Major who

is calling upon a poet friend in London before he goes off to the theater: In one city an amateur actor asked the British consul. He said that British officers do not wear their uniforms except when in active service, but on the stage one famous actor had by his example created the convention of wearing the uniform. In all probability he meant Cyril Maude. At just that same time I asked Lord Dunsany the same question in another city. He said that by no means should the actor wear a uniform. Likewise in most performances of A. E. W. Mason's *Green Stockings* the British officer back from Somaliland wears mufti, or civilian clothes, but in a photograph of a university performance, he is in khaki. As in such a minor matter as costume so in the larger, essential matters of characterization, a performer may have to supply a conception from elements outside the play itself.

When you speak lines from a play inject as much naturalness and sincerity into your delivery as you can command. Speak the words as though they really express your own ideas and feelings. If you feel that you must exaggerate slightly because of the impression the remark is intended to make, rely more upon emphasis than upon any other device to secure an effect. Never slip into an affected manner of delivering any speech. No matter what kind of acting you have seen upon amateur or professional stage, you must remember that moderation is the first essential of the best acting. Recall what Shakespeare had Hamlet say to the players.

In taking part in a play you must do more than simply recite words spoken by some one other than yourself. You



must really act like that person. This adds to the simple delivery of speeches all those other traits by which persons in real life are different from one another. Such complete identification of your personality with that of the person you are trying to represent in a play results in character delineation, or characterization.

You may believe that you cannot represent an Indian chief or a British queen, or an Egyptian slave, or a secret-service agent, but if you will recall your childish pastime of day-dreaming you will see at once that you have quite frequently identified yourself with some one else, and in that other character you have made yourself experience the strangest and most thrilling adventures. When you study a rôle in a scene or play, use your imagination in that same manner. In a short time it will be easy for you to think as that other character would. Then you have become identified with him. The first step in your delineation has been taken.

Visualize in your mind's eye—your imagination—the circumstances in which that character is placed in the play. See yourself looking, moving, acting as he would. Then talk as that character would in those circumstances. Make him react as he would naturally in the situations in which the dramatist has placed him.

Let us try to make this more definite. Suppose a youth is chosen to act the part of an old man. An old man does not speak as rapidly as a young man does. He will have to change the speed of his speech. But suppose the old man is moved to wrath, would his words come slowly? Would he speak distinctly or would he almost choke?

The young woman who is delineating a foreigner must picture her accent and hesitation in speaking English. She would give to her face the rather vacant questioning look such a woman would have as the English speech flits about her, too quickly for her to comprehend all of it.

The woman who tries to present a British queen in a Shakespeare play must not act as she does at a dinner party. Yet if that queen is stricken in her feelings as a mother, might not all the royal dignity melt away, and her Majesty act like any sorrowing woman?

The dramatist may be very careful to set down clearly and accurately the traits, dispositions, actions of the people in his plays. In this second case the performer must try to carry out every direction, every hint of the dramatist. In the first case, he must search the lines of the play to glean every slightest suggestion which will help him to carry out the dramatist's intention. Famous actors of characters in Shakespeare's plays can give a reason for everything they show—at least, they should be able to do so—and this foundation should be a compilation of all the details supplied by the play itself, and stage tradition of its productions.

In early printed plays there are practically no descriptions of the characters. Questions about certain Shakespeare characters will never be solved to the satisfaction of all performers. For instance, how old is Hamlet in the tragedy? How close to madness did the dramatist expect actors to portray his actions? During Hamlet's fencing match with Laertes in the last scene the Queen says, "He's

fat, and scant of breath." Was she describing his size, or meaning that he was out of fencing trim?

Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Julius Cæsar a detailed description of the appearance and manner of acting of one of the chief characters of the tragedy.

Let me have men about me that are fat;  
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights:  
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;  
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

\* \* \* \* \*

Would he were fatter! But I fear him not:  
Yet if my name were liable to fear,  
I do not know the man I should avoid  
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much;  
He is a great observer, and he looks  
Quite through the deeds of men; he loves no plays,  
As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;  
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort  
As if he mock'd himself and scorn'd his spirit  
That could be mov'd to smile at any thing.

In *As You Like It* when the two girls are planning to flee to the forest of Arden, Rosalind tells how she will disguise herself and act as a man. This indicates to the actress both costume and behavior for the remainder of the comedy.

Were it not better,  
Because that I am more than common tall,  
That I did suit me all points like a man?  
A gallant curtle-ax upon my thigh,  
A boar-spear in my hand; and—in my heart  
Lie there what hidden woman's fear there will—  
We'll have a swashing and a martial outside,

As many other mannish cowards have  
That do outface it with their semblances

In many cases Shakespeare clearly shows the performer exactly how to carry out his ideas of the nature of a man during part of the action. One of the plainest instances of this kind of instruction is in *Macbeth*. The ambitious thane's wife is urging him on to murder his king. Her advice gives the directions for the following scenes.

O never

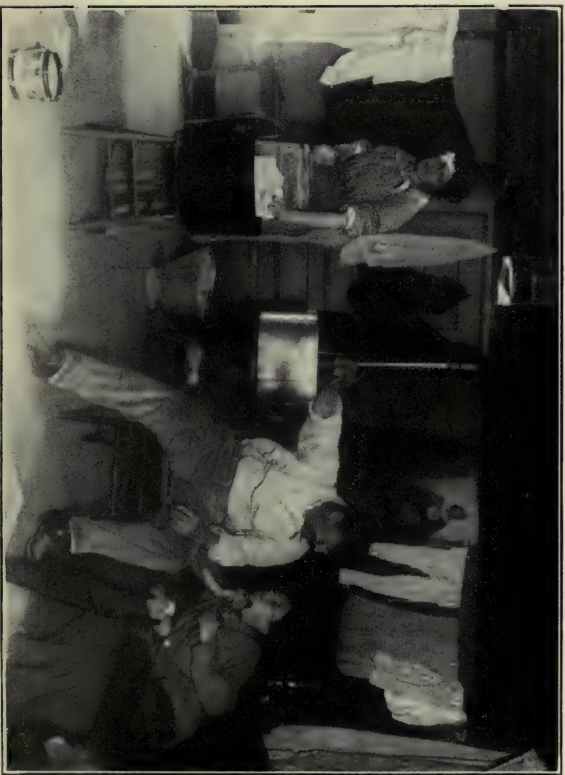
Shall sun that morrow see!  
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men  
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,  
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,  
Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under't. He that's coming  
Must be provided for: and you shall put  
This night's great business into my dispatch;  
Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

Modern dramatists are likely to be much more careful in giving advice about characterization. They insert a large number of stage directions covering this matter. Speed of delivery, tone and inflection, as well as underlying feeling and emotion are minutely indicated. These lines from *Lady Windermere's Fan* leave nothing to indefinite guess.

DUCHESS OF BERWICK

Mr. Hopper, I am very angry with you. You have taken Agatha out on the terrace, and she is so delicate.





*Mrs. Pat and the Lare, by Mary Aldis. The Play-House, Lake Forest.*



Photographs by White

*Alice in Wonderland*, dramatized by Alice Gerstenberg.  
The Playhouse, Chicago. Designed by William  
Penhallow Henderson.

HOPPER

(*At left of center*) Awfully sorry, Duchess. We went out for a moment and then got chatting together.

DUCHESS

(*At center*) Ah, about dear Australia, I suppose?

HOPPER

Yes.

DUCHESS

Agatha, darling! (*Beckons her over.*)

AGATHA

Yes, mamma!

DUCHESS

(*Aside*) Did Mr. Hopper definitely—

AGATHA

Yes, mamma.

DUCHESS

And what answer did you give him, dear child?

AGATHA

Yes, mamma.

DUCHESS

(*Affectionately*) My dear one! You always say the right thing. Mr. Hopper! James! Agatha has told me everything. How cleverly you have both kept your secret.

HOPPER

You don't mind my taking Agatha off to Australia, then, Duchess?

DUCHESS

(*Indignantly*) To Australia? Oh, don't mention that dreadful vulgar place.

HOPPER

But she said she'd like to come with me.

DUCHESS

(*Severely*) Did you say that, Agatha?

AGATHA

Yes, mamma.

DUCHESS

Agatha, you say the most silly things possible.

In addition to definite directions at special times during the course of the dialogue, modern writers of plays describe every character quite fully at the first entrance into the action. This gives the delineator of each rôle a working basis for his guidance. Such directions carefully followed out assure the tone for the whole cast. They keep a subordinate part always in the proper relation to all others. They make certain the impression of the whole story as a consistent artistic development. They prevent misunderstandings about the author's aim. They provide that every character shall appear to be swayed by natural motives. They remove from the performance all suggestions of unregulated caprice.

Dramatists vary in the exactness and minuteness of such descriptive character sketches, but even the shortest and most general is necessary to the proper appreciation of every play, even if it is being merely read. When a student is assimilating a rôle for rehearsing or acting, these additions of the author are as important as the lines themselves.



Excellent descriptions of characters are in the stage directions of most modern plays. Instructor and students should endeavor to secure variety of interest in rôles. At first, assignments are likely to be determined by apparent fitness. The quiet youth is not required to play the part of the braggart. The retiring girl is not expected to impersonate the shrew. In one or two appearances it may be a good thing to keep in mind natural aptitude.

Then there should be a departure from this system. Educational development comes not only from doing what you are best able to do, but from developing the less-marked phases of your disposition and character. The opposite practice should be followed, at least once. Let the prominent class member assume a rôle of subdued personality. Let the timid take the lead. Induce the silent to deliver the majority of the speeches. You will be amazed frequently to behold the best delineations springing from such assignments.

Such rehearsing of a play already studied should terminate the minute analysis in order to show the material for what it is—actable drama. It will vivify the play again, and make the characters live in your memory as mere reading never will. You will see the moving people, the grouped situations, the developed story, the impressive climax, and the satisfying conclusion.

In dealing with scenes from a long play—whether linked or disconnected—students will always have a feeling of incompleteness. In a full-length play no situation is complete in itself. It is part of a longer series of events. It may finish one part of the action, but it usually merely

carries forward the plot, passing on the complication to subsequent situations.

To deal with finished products should be the next endeavor. There are hundreds of short plays suitable for class presentation in an informal manner. Most of them do not require intensive study, as does a great Greek or English drama, so their preparation may go on entirely outside the classroom. It should be frankly admitted that the exercises of delivering lines "in character" as here described is not acting or producing the play. That will come later. These preliminary exercises—many or few, painstaking or sketchy—are processes of training students to speak clearly, interestingly, forcefully, in the imagined character of some other person. The student must not wrongly believe that he is acting.

Though the delivery of a complete short play may seem like a performance, both participants and audience, if there is any, must not think of it so. It is class exercise, subject to criticism, comment, improvement, exactly as all other class recitations are.

Since the entire class has not had the chance to become familiar with all the short plays to be presented, some one should give an introductory account of the time and place of action. There might be added any necessary comments upon the characters. The cast of characters should be written upon the board, or distributed in typed programs.

This exercise should develop the plot of the play, create suspense, impress the climax, and satisfactorily round off the play. In order to accomplish these important effects the participants will soon discover that they must agree

upon certain details to be made most significant. This will lead to discussions about how to make these points stand out. In the concerted attempt to give proper emphasis to some line late in the play it will be found necessary to suppress a possible emphasis of some line early in the action. To reinforce a trait of some person, another character may have to be made more self-assertive.

To secure this unified effect which every play should make the persons involved will have to consider carefully every detail in lines and stage directions, fully agree upon what impression they must strive for, then heartily cooperate in attaining it. They must forget themselves to remember always that "the play's the thing."

The following list will suggest short plays suitable for informal classroom training in dramatics. Most of these are also general enough in their appeal to serve for regular production upon a stage before a miscellaneous audience.

ALDRICH, T. B.....	<i>Pauline Pavlovna</i>
BARING, M.....	<i>Diminutive Dramas</i>
BUTLER, E. P.....	<i>The Revolt</i>
CANNAN, G.....	<i>Everybody's Husband</i>
DUNSANY, LORD .....	<i>Tents of the Arabs</i>
	<i>The Lost Silk Hat</i>
	<i>Fame and the Poet</i>
FENN AND PRYCE.....	<i>'Op-o-Me-Thumb</i>
GALE, Z. ....	<i>Neighbors</i>
GERSTENBERG, A.....	<i>Overtones</i>
	<i>Fourteen</i>
GIBSON, W. W.....	<i>Plays in Collected Works</i>
GREGORY, LADY.....	<i>Spreading the News</i>
	<i>The Workhouse Ward</i>
	<i>Coats, etc.</i>

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HOUGHTON, S.....	<i>The Dear Departed</i> <i>Phipps</i>
JONES, H. A.....	<i>Her Tongue</i>
KREYMBORG, A.....	<i>Mannikin and Minnikin</i>
MOELLER, P.....	<i>Pokey</i> <i>A Road House in Arden</i>
O'NEILL, E.....	<i>'Ile</i>
QUINTERO, J. AND S. A.....	<i>A Sunny Morning</i>
RICE, C.....	<i>The Immortal Lure</i>
STEVENS, T. W.....	<i>Ryland</i> <i>Holbein at Blackfriars</i>
SUDERMANN, H.....	<i>The Far-Away Princess</i> <i>Fritzchen</i>
SYNGE.....	<i>The Shadow of the Glen</i> <i>Riders to the Sea</i>
TCHEKOFF, A.....	<i>A Marriage Proposal</i>
TORRENCE, R.....	<i>The Rider of Dreams</i>
WALKER, S.....	<i>Never-the-Less</i> <i>The Very Naked Boy</i>
YEATS, W. B.....	<i>Cathleen Ni Houlihan</i>

When rôles are determined or assigned there enters into the studying the educative value of rapid, accurate memorizing. Anything delivered by the faddist pedagogues to the contrary notwithstanding, there is a decided value for every person in ability to memorize. Various schemes for perfecting this mechanical ability have been described in the Chapter on Rehearsing.

In the delivery of memorized lines of plays the instructor of a class in dramatics has the widest field for permanent effects. So much has been spoken and written about all the disagreeableness suggested by the term, "the American voice," that no amplification need be set down here. It



would not be an inappropriate thing to have the beginner learn and comment on every precept of Hamlet's advice to the players. Beginning with the simple needs of pronunciation and enunciation, the training—never losing touch with these—should extend to mastery of diction, sense of rhythm, and beauty of utterance. Good prose has these qualities as well as blank verse, though training is easier when linked with the poetic form. There is no occasion here to lament the miserable delivery of blank verse upon our stage, until we have lamented more effectively the lack of any poetry at all. However in schools, both prose and verse can be made to yield lasting results of far-reaching significance. The student actress may never deliver a line from the professional stage, but if she marries she can influence her immediate household by the charm and beauty of her speech. The school may get to be so renowned for results in speech betterment that it will attract interested school teachers. Think of the enormous influence which would be exerted if all the teachers of the nation learned to speak clearly, interestingly, and beautifully.

So far this discussion has taken cognizance only of the acted side of the play. There may be in the class, or parallel to it, a group more interested in the other arts of the theater than in acting. What shall have been assigned to them during this training of the performers themselves? All the work so sketchily outlined here can easily be made to serve for them. At the same time that scenes are considered for acting problems in scene designing may be distributed to the student architects, costume designers, in-

terior decorators, scene designers, and builders. A series of individual methods may be instigated to induce original self-expression and to help discover latent talent. Or severe restrictions may be imposed. The treatment assigned may be severely historical. Or it may prescribe only pylons, flats, and draperies. The sketches, finished models, and even constructed paraphernalia for a full-sized stage, all the elements of which were restricted to platforms and cubes, assigned by Josef Urban to a student group were an unusual contribution to such a scheme. Various other plans to follow will have been suggested by other portions of this book. A full set of costume plates or make-up sketches might also be prepared. Even furniture made to scale will help all the participants in a dramatic study project.

If, as frequently happens, artists work more rapidly than actors, they can be kept busy with material not under preparation for presentation. While every play may be made to present problems—as for instance, *Hamlet* with permanent frames but moveable set pieces, and draperies and tapestries, or *Richard III* within permanent side walls—many of these are beyond students. Some of the following offer nice adjustments of opinions to text, of design to action, of originality to requirements, of style to fitness.

1. Should the entire masque of *Comus* by Milton be acted out-of-doors? When presented on an indoors stage what should scene 2 be? Inside the palace of Comus? How then do the two Brothers get in? How and where do Sabrina and her attendant Nymphs rise? From a

pool, or fountain? Might the stage show an exterior? Would the palace be on one side? The edge of the woods on the other? The banks of the river at the rear? Would such an arrangement make entrances, exits, dancing, acting, effective? Search until you have reasons for all your opinions.

2. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, scene 1. Interior? Exterior? Color? Lighting?

3. *Hamlet*, Act I, scene 5. Castle battlements? A graveyard? Open space in country some distance from castle?

4. *Comus*, scene 3.

5. *The Tempest*, Act I, scene 1.

6. *Twelfth Night*, Act II, scene 3.

7. *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, scene 1.

8. *Julius Cæsar*, Act III, scene 2.

9. In a long, high-vaulted room, looking out upon a Roman garden where the cypresses rise in narrowing shafts from thickets of oleander and myrtle, is seated a company of men and women, feasting.

William Sharp: *The Lute-Player*

10. A room, half drawing-room, half study, in Lewis Davenant's house in Rockminister. Furniture eighteenth century, pictures, china in glass cases. An April afternoon in 1860.

George Moore: *Elizabeth Cooper*

11. An Island off the West of Ireland. Cottage kitchen, with nets, oil-skins, spinning wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc.

J. M. Synge: *Riders to the Sea*

12. Loud music. After which the Scene is discovered, being a Laboratory or Alchemist's work-house. Vulcan looking at the register, while a Cyclope, tending the fire, to the cornets began to sing.

Ben Jonson: *Mercury Vindicated*

13. Rather an awesome picture it is with the cold blue river and the great black cliffs and the blacker cypresses that grow along its banks. There are signs of a trodden slope and a ferry, and there's a rough old wooden shelter where passengers can wait; a bell hung on the top with which they call the ferryman.

Calthrop and Barker: *The Harlequinade*

Long before any play is produced there should be made a sketch or plan showing the stage settings. From this sketch a working model should be constructed. If it is in color it will reproduce the appearance of the actual stage. One important point is to be noted. Your sketch or model is merely a miniature of the real thing. If you have in it a splotch of glaring color only an inch long it will appear in the full-size setting about two feet long. A seemingly flat surface three by five inches in the design will come out six by ten feet behind the footlights.

In educational dramatics rehearsals should be considered as discussed in this book, whether the director be the instructor or a student from an advanced class. Productions of educational undertakings are different from all others. In others the test of a performance is its effect upon the audience. In educational dramatics—while the reaction of the audience is important—it is overbalanced



by the effect upon the students themselves, in critical power, in self-examination, in improvement of method, in ease of acting, in application of technique. A recognition of the attitude of an audience before a school performance—whether ordinary high school or professional drama school—is necessary to a weighing of all constituent elements of success. An audience which has paid for its seats is easier to impress than a “free” audience. The audience which has wanted to attend will be more responsive than the one induced by invitation. The “free-pass” audience, or its amateur “dead-head” or “paper” equivalent is most frigid of all. An educational institution, therefore, must consider its kinds of audiences much more carefully than the usual little theater group. Means should be devised to prevent the attendance of merely friends of the performers. Whether too candid or too lenient such personal associates do not constitute a good audience. If the choice of play is correct and the acting reaches a high level it will not be long before a large number of exactly the right kind of persons will be attracted. The Carnegie Institute audience, which by the terms of the foundation must always be a non-paying one, has increased to some six times its original size. From it has developed directly the paying audience which supports the graduate organization, the Guild Players. The audience of the other most distinctive school of drama, the 47 Workshop at Harvard is expected to take part in the educational development by filling in and returning blanks concerning productions. Persons who neglect to grant this small return for the privilege of attendance are dropped from the mailing lists.

Unless the audience can become the cognate of the general public of the commercial theaters, acting before it has no special educational value for students. A play, a rôle must impress and interest because of its intrinsic appeal and merit. The smaller and fewer the adventitious aids to tolerance can be made, the better training does acting become.

The corollary of the foregoing is that a single performance is never enough for an amateur cast. One trial is no assurance of ability. In school productions it is a good practice to insist always upon an adherence to the dictum laid down in the chapter on Rehearsing that a dress rehearsal should be exactly like a performance, except that the audience at the regular performance is either a general paying one, or a group gathered by invitation of the class or organization offering the play. It is extremely easy to secure as large, if a totally different audience, for the dress rehearsal. In case the evening audience is a paying one, invite the members of the school to attend the dress rehearsal at a very small admission price. In case the evening performance is to an invited audience, ask to the dress rehearsal all the members of the school. There is no reason, if the play has been adequately rehearsed, why the dress rehearsal should not equal the performance. In many schools dress rehearsals are perfect in every detail. Appearing once before an audience insures ease at the second appearance, besides giving the amateur actors the feeling of having won twice as much recognition. Ease, speed, comfort, confidence, are secured for every person concerned, by this logical procedure.

The actors and the director must be prepared for one detail of supreme importance. The two audiences will be radically different in their responses, and even when they agree in time of reaction, they will be differentiated entirely in degree and reason of reaction. Amateur performers must be warned of this, and admonished to hold their characterizations, situations, and points, in spite of dress rehearsal experiences. Pathos will be effective to varying degrees, surprisingly far apart in their depth. Humor will be interpreted at contradictory points. Interest may rise in more rapid or more leisurely fashion. A dress rehearsal audience is having its curiosity satisfied. A regular audience is having its interest aroused or its emotions stirred.

This difference is true of a metropolitan audience. I have sat through the dress rehearsal of a comedy in a New York theater without hearing a single audible laugh from the fifty or seventy-five spectators. This difference of response is being cited to discount the reception of new plays by a first-night audience in New York, because it is made up largely of newspaper critics and professional theatrical workers.

For real knowledge of acting and producing the play should be repeated frequently. So far as the actors are concerned such repetitions will give them chances for self-examination. Having reduced the acting to the reflexive state they can concentrate their consciousness upon the means employed and the ends attained—or missed. With ease of acting should come certainty of effect. With certainty of effect should come economy of effort. With economy of effort comes mastery of technique. Repetition makes

criticism valuable. A report on a performer's exhibition after one performance is almost valueless. What will he do with the change suggested if he has no opportunity of incorporating it in a subsequent repetition of the same play? It is even doubtful if any criticism is listened to carefully enough, or apprehended clearly enough, to make any more than a fleeting impression. When, under the temperamental or nervous stress of a new production, it is listened to at all and fully understood, it is likely to be resented as a derogatory remark. Flung aside contemptuously it certainly will have no effect upon future interpretations. When, however, there are many performances, there are chances that sane and legitimate corrections will show in intelligent modifications of scenes.

When the sum total of all these detailed warnings and corrections has become part of the performers' instinctive method of attacking new rôles, then it may be said that their student training is almost over, and they should become developing actors.



## APPENDIX



## TWO HUNDRED PLAYS SUITABLE FOR AMATEURS

### NOTE

The following list is merely suggestive, but it does include a specimen of almost every kind of play within the general range of amateur groups. Many successes of certain organizations would be entirely unsuited to others. It is hoped that the brief annotations will help determine choices. As intimate theaters indulge in rather startling novelties beginners are here advised that many frequently-produced plays depend directly upon a highly developed sophistication of the audiences.

#### A—One Hundred Full-Length Plays

Andreev, L. *The Sabine Women*. 3 A. Large cast. A daring, farcical treatment of an interesting topic. Not for unsophisticated audiences. *Drama*, 1914.

Aristophanes. *Lysistrata*. Large cast. Old comedy much used now to satirize woman's rights movement. May be treated in a score of original manners. For sophisticated only. Samuel French.

Bahr, Herman. *The Master*. 3 A. 9 m. 3 f. Excellent play, dealing with the forceful man. One interior. All rôles good. If used, the translation should be corrected from the original; the scene restored to its European country. For sophisticated only. Nicholas Brown.

Baring, Maurice. *The Green Elephant*. 4 A. 6 m. 4 f. 3 interiors. An early, well-constructed theft mystery. Better than many later professional successes. Amateurs can produce this effectively. Constable and Co.

Barker, Granville. *The Madras House*. 4 A. 8 m. 12 f. Extras. Modern comedy. Not too easy. Contains some

sure theatrical devices. Some rôles exacting. For experienced players, and sophisticated audiences.

Mitchell Kennerley.

—*The Harlequinade*. Five scenes. Varying cast. Possible with simple artistic settings. The spirit of comedy through the ages. Whimsical. Little, Brown and Co.

Barrie, James M. *Alice Sit-by-the-Fire*. 3 A. 3 m. 6 f. Charming comedy. Leading woman must be good actress. Two interior sets. Quite effective.

Charles Scribner's Sons.

—*What Every Woman Knows*. (About her husband.) 4 A. 5 m. 4 f. Extras. Sets elaborate. Two rôles fairly difficult. Good play.

—*The Admirable Crichton*. 4 A. 7 m. 6 f. Sets difficult. Rôles excellent. Frequently produced by amateurs. An English butler takes care of his master's family wrecked on an island.

Bennett, Arnold. *The Great Adventure*. 4 A. 15 m. 3 f. 4 interiors. While not a strong story this is fairly effective. Artist lets world believe he died. Good acting will carry it.

—*The Title*. 3 A. 4 m. 4 f. This is a better comedy on class feeling in England. Not too difficult.

—*Milestones*. 3 A. 9 m. 6 f. A good play for actors of tried ability, sure of gaining effects. Good theme. Presents three generations; the characters age greatly between acts. Not for novices.

Bernstein, Henri. *The Thief*. 3 A. 5 m. 2 f. Good delineation of a strong situation. Two rôles exacting. For fairly experienced amateurs. Doubleday, Page and Co.

Besier, Rudolph. *Don*. 3 A. 4 m. 5 f. Rapid fire situations. Good characters. Quite within ability of amateurs.

Duffield and Co.



—*Lady Patricia*. 3 A. 7 m. 3 f. Excellent comedy. Few rôles exacting. 2 sets, 1 fairly difficult. If done properly this is always effective.

Brighthouse, H. *Hobson's Choice*. 4 A. 7 m. 5 f. Genre study of crafty Lancaster work people. Dialect presents difficulty. Sets fairly difficult. Doubleday, Page and Co.

Calderon, G. *The Fountain*. 3 A. 12 m. 6 f. Extras. One interior. Excellent rôles. English comedy with purpose. Social reform acts like a boomerang. Not difficult. Gowans and Gray.

Chapin, Harold. *Art and Opportunity*. 3 A. 5 m. 2 f. 2 sets; can be played in one. Good characters, situations. Maneuvers of a fascinating woman.

American Play Co., N. Y.

Chesterton, G. K. *Magic*. 3 A. 6 m. 1 f. Only 2 sets. Effective if the proper atmosphere of supernatural influence can be produced. All parts good.

G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Davies, H. H. *The Mollusc*. 3 A. 2 m. 2 f. Good comedy of character. One interior. Good acting required, but suitable for most amateurs who know something of modern stage performances. Baker and Co.

—*Lady Epping's Lawsuit*. 3 A. 12 m. 7 f. Extras. Interiors. Large cast. Satirical comedy. Extravagant situations. Almost acts itself.

Dumas, Alexandre. *Marriage of Convenience*. 4 A. 4 m. 2 f. Excellent costume comedy. Small cast. One set, interior. Long popular. Samuel French.

Dunsany, Lord. *The Gods of the Mountain*. 3 A. 10 m. 5 f. The best known play of this dramatist. Costumes, setting, lighting offer opportunities for novel and picturesque treatment. The stone gods come to life to punish.

Ervine, St. John. *Jane Clegg*. 3 A. 4 m. 3 f. One interior. Drab but excellent. Leading woman good rôle, requires finished acting. A humble wife, yet "captain of her soul."  
Henry Holt and Company.

—*John Ferguson*. 3 A. 5 m. 2 f. One interior set. Tense situation, remarkably well developed. Not for beginners, but possible for sincere, experienced performers.

Euripides. *The Trojan Women*. 3 m. 4 f. Chorus, etc. Powerful tragedy showing horrors of war. Cast may be large or small. 1 set. Makes a strong appeal.

Longmans, Green and Co.

Fitch, Clyde. *The Truth*. 4 A. 5 m. 4 f. 2 interiors. Excellent treatment of a good theme. Some rôles exacting. Successful on professional stage. Samuel French.

France, Anatole. *Crinquebille*. 3 A. 10 m. 4 f. Extras. Vivid character study of old French huckster. Several good rôles, but the lead demands finished character acting. Two sets. Samuel French.

Galsworthy, J. *The Pigeon*. 3 A. 12 m. 2 f. While hardly more than a character study amateurs can make this telling. Two parts rather difficult. Not for all audiences.

G. P. Putnam's Sons.

—*Strife*. 3 A. Some 30 rôles. Extras. The labor question. Most audiences respond to this. The acting is not too exacting.

—*The Silver Box*. 3 A. 3 interiors. Large cast. Comedy. Lighter in substance than these others, but good material for production. Contrast of classes.

Gates, E. *The Poor Little Rich Girl*. 3 A. 15 m. 10 f. Fancy and fact combined. Several scenes. Chances for original stage sets. Good. Grosset and Dunlap.

Gogol, N. V. *The Inspector-General*. 4 A. Very large

cast. Good exposé of grafting city affairs. Characters, incidents good. Long a popular play. Alfred A. Knopf.

Goldsmith, Oliver. *She Stoops to Conquer*. 5 A. 6 m. 4 f. Extras. One of the best costume plays for amateurs. Most frequently produced by schools.

Hankin, St. John. *The Cassilis Engagement*. 4 A. 6 m. 8 f. A mistaken engagement is saved by showing the man what his fiancée is really like. Good acting parts.

—*The Charity That Began at Home*. 4 A. 6 m. 6 f. 2 interiors. An enthusiast actually tries to put an idealistic doctrine into practice. Undesirables at a house party. Laughable.

Harcourt, Cyril. *A Pair of Silk Stockings*. 3 A. 8 m. 5 f. Comedy. 2 interiors. Laughable if played in the proper spirit. A professional success. Dodd, Mead and Co.

Hastings, B. Macdonald. *The New Sin*. All men parts. Not a pleasant story, but effective. Novelty of cast should carry performance. Samuel French.

Hazelton, G. and Benrimo. *The Yellow Jacket*. 3 A. Some 27 rôles. Delightful Chinese play produced in novel manner. Little scenery required. Lines and incidents carry the play. Bobbs-Merrill Co.

Hewlett, Maurice. *Pan and the Young Shepherd*. 2 A. 6 m. 9 f. Pastoral. Good also for outdoors. Grouping picturesque. William Heinemann.

Houghton, Stanley. *Hindle Wakes*. 3 A. 4 m. 5 f. Two interiors. Effective play with new turn to familiar situation. Requires sincere acting. Quite possible for most mature amateurs. For sophisticated audiences. Luce and Co.

Housman, Laurence and Barker, Granville. *Prunella*. 3 A. Charming fantasy. Costumes. One set. May include many people. Requires proper treatment for atmosphere.

Little, Brown and Co.

Housman, Laurence. *The Chinese Lantern*. 3 A. 6 m. 2 f. Extras. Oriental interior. Every rôle good. Can be made beautiful. Can be played by all-girl cast. Delightful fantasy. Frequently produced by schools and colleges.

Samuel French.

Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*. 3 A. 4 m. 4 f. Children. One interior. Most frequently acted play by this master of stage situation. Leading rôle difficult. Play can be made effective if acted in proper key. Charles Scribner's Sons.

—*Pillars of Society*. 4 A. 10 m. 9 f. One interior. An interesting arraignment of smug hypocrisy unmasked after years of apparent security. Not too difficult, though it must be conscientiously acted. Good for all audiences.

James, Henry. *The Reprobate*. 3 A. 6 m. 4 f. Usual English interior. Excellent farce-comedy. Not too easy, but worth doing well. Recently produced successfully in England. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Jerome, Jerome K. *Fanny and the Servant Problem*, also called *Lady Bantock*. 4 A. 5 m. 6 f. Extras. One interior. Excellent in every respect. Frequently produced by amateurs. Samuel French.

—*Miss Hobbs*. 4 A. 6 m. 5 f. Acting not difficult, but one set in cabin of boat. A good play for amateurs of some practice.

—*Passing of the Third Floor Back*. Excellent character study. One interior. Lead difficult. Other rôles not. Can be effective.

Jones, Henry Arthur. *The Lie*. 4 A. 5 m. 5 f. Contrast between two sisters. Rather drab story. Excellent as play. Rôles require good acting. Sets not easy.

George H. Doran Co.

—*The Liars*. 4 A. 10 m. 6 f. Bright comedy of English



society. Not too easy to act. Effective. Sets fairly difficult. Samuel French.

—*Mary Goes First*. 3 A. 8 m. 4 f. Social jealousies. Leading woman good rôle for finished actress. Not too difficult otherwise. Doubleday, Page and Co.

Jonson, Ben. *The Sad Shepherd*. 15 m. 6 f. Excellent for outdoors also. Poetic idyl. Frequently produced by schools and colleges. Amateurs could easily present this as a novel contrast. E. P. Dutton and Co.

Kalidasa. *Sakuntala*. Some 30 rôles. In cut form a good series of scenes. If scenery be used many changes required. Always worth producing. Chance for artistic originality. Everyman Library.

Lyly, John. *Alexander and Campaspe*. 24 m. (or fewer) 2 f. Elizabethan comedy of Greek plot. May be made attractive by pictorial appeal. Girls alone might do it.

Mackaye, Percy. *A Thousand Years Ago*. 4 A. 9 m. 2 f. Many extras. Story slight. Costumes, incidents carry the play. Several sets. Stage pictures may be beautiful. Doubleday, Page and Co.

Masefield, John. *The Tragedy of Nan*. 3 A. 8 m. 5 f. Strong, stark story of rural England over a century ago. Requires careful producing, excellent acting.

Mitchell Kennerley.

Mason, A. E. W. *Green Stockings*. 4 A. 4 m. 5 f. Two interiors; may be played in one only. All rôles good. Older sister invents hypothetical suitor who appears in the flesh. Samuel French.

Maugham, S. *The Tenth Man*. 3 A. 10 m. 3 f. He is an honest one. Strong. The guile of politics. Setting rather difficult. Drama Pub. Co.

—*Lady Frederick*. 3 A. 8 m. 5 f. Comedy of English so-

ciety. 2 sets. A few of the rôles exacting. Requires correct tone.  
Samuel French.

Milne, A. A. *Belinda*. 3 A. 3 m. 3 f. Supposed widow, presenting daughter as niece, keeps two suitors dangling. Husband returns. Delightful comedy. All rôles good.

Alfred A. Knopf.

Moffett, G. *When Bunty Pulls the Strings*. 3 A. 5 m. 5 f. Extras. Realistic pictures of canny Scots. Good comedy. Dialect the chief difficulty. Good character parts.

Sanger and Jordan.

Molière. *Doctor in Spite of Himself*. 3 A. 8 m. 3 f. 2 sets. Good acting parts. One of the best plays for amateurs. Parts almost carry themselves.

—*The Miser*. 5 A. 10 m. 4 f. Extras. French interior. Costumes, 17th Century. Some rôles require excellent acting. Worth producing.

—*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. 5 A. (or fewer) 11 m. 4 f. Extras. One set, interior. Music, dancing, may be included. Not difficult. Conclusion an oriental spectacle. Excellent for schools, colleges.

Molnar, F. *The Devil*. 3 A. 7 m. 7 f. Novel. Excellent. For sophisticated audiences. Leading man difficult to act.

Mitchell Kennerley.

Noyes, Alfred. *Sherwood*. 5 A. 22 rôles. Extras. Outdoor pageant-play. Good to introduce large groups. Frequently given. Good for community purposes.

F. A. Stokes Co.

O'Neill, Eugene. *Beyond the Horizon*. 3 A. 6 m. 2 f. 1 child. 2 sets. Distinctive tragedy of grim American life. Contrast of two brothers; each does the wrong thing. Leading rôle difficult.

Boni and Liveright.

Parker, Louis N. *The Aristocrat*. 3 A. 15 m. 5 f. Ex-

tras. Reign of Terror. Large cast. 3 sets. Leading rôle excellent. Several require finished acting. John Lane.

Peabody, Josephine Preston. *The Piper*. 4 A. 24 rôles. Though sets are rather difficult, amateurs can produce this. Leading rôle rather difficult.

Houghton Mifflin Co.

Peele, George. *Arraignment of Paris*. 5 A. (or fewer) 17 m. 24 f. Suitable also for outdoors. Beautiful costumes, groupings, dances. Should be treated as masque.

Houghton Mifflin Co.

Pinero, Arthur Wing. *The Gay Lord Quex*. 4 A. 4 m. 10 f. Extras. A popular, good comedy. Settings rather elaborate. Always effective. A few rôles exacting.

Baker and Co.

—*The Amazons*. 3 A. 7 m. 5 f. Farcical romance. Woodland, and gymnasium interior. Three daughters raised as boys attract unexpected suitors and revolt from masculinity to their own charming sex. Rôles and situations good. Always effective. Not difficult.

—*Trelawney of the Wells*. 3 A. Large cast. 4 easy interiors. Costumes of 1860. Sentimental; but effective if properly acted.

Robertson, F. W. *David Garrick*. 3 A. 9 m. 3 f. Simple interiors. Costumes of 18th Century make attractive stage pictures. Leading rôle good acting part.

Penn Pub. Co.

Robinson, L. *The White-Headed Boy*. 3 A. 5 m. 7 f. 1 interior. An Irish family has tried to make a genius of a stupid son. They are outwitted. Good comedy. Excellent rôles. Easy to produce.

T. Fisher Unwin.

Rostand, Edmond. *The Romancers* (also called *Fantasticks*). 3 A. 5 m. 1 f. Extras. "Costumes may be any-

thing, provided they are beautiful." One garden set. Delightful fantasy; successful. Baker and Co.

Sardou, Victorien. *A Scrap of Paper*. 3 A. 6 m. 6 f. Old-fashioned, but still good. Situations and rôles can be so produced as to interest and hold audiences that are not too familiar with the play. Baker and Co.

Shaw, G. Bernard. *Candida*. 3 A. 4 m. 2 f. One set, interior. Requires good acting. Every rôle a good one. Brentano.

—*You Never Can Tell*. 4 A. 6 m. 4 f. Farcical exposé of parents and children. This almost carries itself. Sets difficult.

—*Pygmalion*. 5 A. 7 m. 7 f. Extras. Excellent. Requires excellent acting. Sets difficult. Parts good.

—*Getting Married*. 8 m. 5 f. One set. If divided into 3 acts as on professional stage this will please thoughtful sophisticated audiences. Acting rather difficult.

Sheridan, J. *School for Scandal*. 5 A. 12 m. 4 f. Extras. Excellent costumed play. Not for sophisticated theater goers. Good for schools. Many sets.

Sigurjonsson, J. *Eyvind of the Hills*. 4 A. 7 m. 5 f. Novel Icelandic story. Sets rather difficult. Stage pictures beautiful. Tragic. Two exacting rôles.

American-Scandinavian Foundation.

Sophocles. *Antigone*. 5 m. 3 f. Chorus, etc. Single setting. Affecting Greek tragedy. May be done with Mendelssohn's music sung and danced by chorus. May be done by girls only. Baker, etc.

Stevens, Thomas Wood. *Pageant of the Italian Renaissance*. 52 m. 2 f. Beautiful spectacle, admitting of elaborate costuming, grouping. Effective out of doors also. Blank verse. Characters presented in novel manner.

A. C. McClurg.



Sudermann, Herman. *Magda*. 4 A. 6 m. 8 f. Strong; tense. Leading woman requires excellent acting. Can be effectively done. For sophisticated audiences.

Charles Scribner's Sons.

Sutro, Alfred. *The Two Virtues*. 4 A. 3 m. 5 f. Modern English comedy. 2 settings. Requires just the proper kind of acting to make impressions.

Brentano.

—*The Perplexed Husband*. 4 A. 3 m. 4 f. 2 interiors. Satire on advanced feminist ideas. The husband duplicates the wife's opinions. Not difficult. Effective.

Syngé, J. M. *The Playboy of the Western World*. 3 A. 7 m. 5 f. Extras. Excellent Irish farce-comedy. Not too difficult. One interior set. Frequently produced.

Luce and Co.

Tarkington, Booth. *Monsieur Beaucaire*. 3 A. 14 m. 7 f. Romantic comedy of Bath in time of Beau Nash. Park and 3 interiors. Excellent acting rôles. Colorful costumes and romantic situations carry this. Not too difficult.

Baker and Co.

Thoma, Ludwig. *Moral*. 3 A. 9 m. 7 f. Extras. An attack on smug self-righteousness. Plot not too original, but situations and rôles good. Not too difficult. For sophisticated audiences.

Alfred A. Knopf.

Thomas, Augustus A. *Her Husband's Wife*. 3 A. 3 m. 3 f. One interior. Amusing cure of the too solicitous wife. All parts good. If well played, effective; if not, dull.

Doubleday, Page and Co.

Upward, Allen. *Paradise Found*. 3 A. 10 m. 6 f. Extras. What would happen if all the ideas of G. Bernard Shaw were carried out. A *reductio ad absurdum* of utopian schemes for the future.

Houghton, Mifflin Co.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance of Being Earnest*. 3 A. 5

m. 4 f. Always effective. Situations almost act themselves. Be sure it is somewhat of a novelty for your audience.

Luce and Co.

—*Lady Windemere's Fan*. 4 A. 7 m. 9 f. Better play than preceding. More difficult. Actors must seem perfectly natural in their social relations. Leading woman difficult rôle.

Williams, Jesse Lynch. *Why Marry?* 3 A. 7 m. 3 f. One set. All rôles good. Humorous study of problems of various kinds of marriages. Amateurs can make a good production of this.

Charles Scribner's Sons.

Yeats, W. B. *The Unicorn from the Stars*. 3 A. 8 m. 2 f. An Irish uprising based on the prophecy of a beggar. After one night of pillage a bitter ending. Good types. Can be made effective.

The Macmillan Co.

Zamacois, Miguel. *The Jesters*. 4 A. 13 m. 2 f. Romantic, poetic. Costumes, settings of 1557, beautiful. Fairly difficult. 4 sets.

Brentano.

Zangwill, Israel. *The Melting Pot*. 4 A. 5 m. 4 f. The American assimilation of the alien. Sets fairly difficult. Appeal good. Requires good acting.

The Macmillan Co.

### B—One Hundred One-Act Plays

Akins, Zoe. *The Magical City*. 7 m. 2 f. The lure of the irregular life of New York. Its influence upon a young artist. Interior set. Not too easy, but effective. For sophisticated audiences.

Forum, 1916.

Aldis, Mary. *Mrs. Pat and the Law*. 2 m. 2 f. 1 boy. Amusing Irish family in the slums. Requires one good child. Father and mother good acting parts. Uniformly successful.

Duffield and Co.

Andreev, L. *Love of One's Neighbor*. Large cast. One requirement of setting slightly difficult. Effect good. Surprise ending. Egmont Arens.

Augier, Emile. *The Post Scriptum*. 1 m. 1 f. Both rôles good. Modern interior. Bright comedy. Frequently produced. Samuel French.

Barrie, James M. *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*. 2 m. 4 f. The best English play on the War. 3 scenes. One old character woman requires finished pathos.

Charles Scribner's Sons.

—*The Twelve Pound Look*. 2 m. 2 f. A bore of a man of affairs sees in his second young wife's eyes the look that led his first wife to independence. Good, if well acted.

Baring, Maurice. *Katherine Parr*. 1 m. 2 f. A farcical scene between Henry VIII and his wife over the eggs and coffee. Always effective. Houghton, Mifflin Co.

—*The Aulis Difficulty*. 2 m. 4 f. A comedy, irreverent treatment of a well-known Greek episode. Exterior. If beautifully set the contrasting farce is all the better.

Beach, L. *The Clod*. 4 m. 1 f. Civil War. Interior. Strong conclusion. Successful by amateurs and in vaudeville. Strong part for woman.

Doubleday, Page and Co.

Benavente, Jacinto. *His Widow's Husband*. 4 m. 3 f. Successfully presented by many amateurs. Modern Spanish interior. Good rôles. Amusing situation.

Charles Scribner's Sons.

—*No Smoking*. 2 m. 2 f. Extras. European train compartment. Farce. Chance for original setting.

Drama, 1917.

Bernard, Tristan. *French without a Master*. 5 m. 2 f. Reliable; frequently performed series of laughable complica-

tions of bogus interpreter who speaks no French. Not difficult. Samuel French.

Binyon, Laurence. *Paris and Cœnone*. 3 m. 4 f. Tragic love story. Exterior. Beautiful verse play. Serves excellently as contrast in modern bill. Constable and Co.

Brown, Alice. *Joint Owners in Spain*. Three old women in the poor house. Extremely effective. Frequently produced. Good character parts. Baker and Co.

Bynner, Witter. *The Little King*. 2 m. 1 f. 2 children. Fairly effective incident of the French Revolution. Verse. Requires two good children. Mitchell Kennerley.

Calderon, George. *The Little Stone House*. 5 m. 2 f. Russian living-room. A mother has been saving money to erect a tomb above the supposed grave of her son. He returns from Siberia, a base convict. She informs the police. Strong, tense situation. Not too Russian for westerners. Successfully produced. Sidgwick and Jackson.

Cannan, Gilbert. *Everybody's Husband*. 1 m. 5 f. Girl's bedroom. Dainty treatment; humorous criticisms of ordinary opinions. Always effective. Huebsch.

D'Annunzio, G. *Dream of an Autumn Sunset*. Several women. Tragic, highly-colored medieval theme, on superstition of harming an enemy by melting an effigy. Setting rather difficult. Poet-Lore, Vol. 15.

Davis, Richard Harding. *Blackmail*. 3 m. 1 f. Tense melodrama of fairly old fashion, but still effective. Easy interior. In Page, B. *Writing for Vaudeville*.

Dell, Floyd. *The Angel Intrudes*. 3 m. 1 f. 2 sets. Not difficult. Effective satire. Easily acted.

Egmont Arens.

DeMille, William. *Food*. 2 m. 1 f. An amusing satire



on the High Cost of Living. Successfully produced in vaudeville. Easily produced. Samuel French.

Down, Oliphant. *The Maker of Dreams*. 2 m. 1 f. Fantasy. Can be made beautiful, dainty. Requires lightness of presentation. Samuel French.

Dunsany, Lord. *Fame and the Poet*. 2 m. 1 f. A clever attack upon the world's treatment of its artists. A new turn to the theme. Easily acted.

*Atlantic Monthly*, 1919.

—*The Glittering Gate*. A dialogue outside the Gate of Heaven. Two criminals, and their discovery. Setting can be remarkably unique. Mitchell Kennerley.

—*The Lost Silk Hat*. 5 m. Farcical situation for men. House exterior. Always effective. Frequently acted.

—*The Queen's Enemies*. 9 m. 2 f. Extras. A queen of old Egypt traps her enemies in a chamber below the Nile. Spectacular tragedy. Excellent chance for setting.

Luce and Co.

—*A Night at an Inn*. 8 m. One of the best one-act tragedies. English interior. Oriental god regains a stolen jewel. Sunwise Turn, N. Y.

Evreinov, N. *Theater of the Soul*. 5 m. 4 f. Unique. Not for novices. Staging, acting difficult. For sophisticated people. Egmont Arens.

Fenn and Pryce. *'Op-o-Me-Thumb*. 1 m. 5 f. Good character parts. One strong girl rôle. Laundry interior. Humorous, pathetic. Samuel French.

France, Anatole. *The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife*. 7 m. 2 f. Uproarious comedy made famous by its unique stage settings. Just as good if simply set. Early French costumes. John Lane.

Fulda, Ludwig. *By Ourselves*. Practically a dialogue.

The much entertaining husband wishes guests would not arrive.

*Poet-Lore*, Vol. 23.

Gale, Zona. *Neighbors*. 2 m. 6 f. Frequently produced. Homely picture of interplay of feeling in rural community. Secures response.

Huebsch.

Gerstenberg, Alice. *Overtones*. 4 f. Not difficult. Effective. Attractive interior. Successful for amateurs and vaudeville.

Doubleday, Page and Co.

Gibson, Wilfrid Wilson. *On the Threshold*. 1 m. 2 f. Cottage interior. Poetic. Not dramatic. Could serve as interlude.

Macmillan and Co.

—*Mates*. 1 m. 2 f. Cottage interior. Poetry. Mother and sweetheart cannot keep miner from the pit and his mates.

Glaspell, Susan. *Trifles*. 3 m. 2 f. A stark drama of dull life in our middle west. Always effective. Kitchen interior.

Frank Shay.

—and Cook, G. C. *Suppressed Desires*. 1 m. 2 f. A satire on psycho-analysis. 2 scenes. Easily acted. Both of these frequently produced. They make good contrasts.

Frank Shay.

Goodman, E. *Eugenically Speaking*. 3 m. 1 f. A girl carries out the principle to the consternation of her family. A good farcical situation. Frequently acted.

Doubleday, Page and Co.

Goodman, K. S. and Hecht, Ben. *The Hero of Santa Maria*. 4 m. 3 f. Extras. Ordinary interior. Excellent satire on small town matters.

Frank Shay.

—*Dust of the Road*. 3 m. 1 f. Christmas play. A chance visitor awakens a dormant conscience. Delicate evocation of the mysterious border-land of reality.

Stage Guild, Chicago.

Gregory, Lady. *Hyacinth Halvey*. 4 m. 2 f. Street before a post-office, small Irish town. A good play for amateurs. Dialect not beyond them. Frequently performed.

Samuel French.

—*The Gaol Gate*. 1 m. 2 f. Outside a prison. Requires careful acting to make impression. Quite within amateur range.

Hankin, St. John. *The Constant Lover*. 1 m. 1 f. A dialogue. Constant means constantly in love—not necessarily with the same girl.

John Lane.

—*The Burglar Who Failed*. 1 m. 2 f. Girl's bedroom. She tames a fierce looking timid amateur thief. Easy.

Hellem, Valcros, and d'Estoc. *Sabotage*. 2 m. 2 f. Extras. Tense strike situation. Should be well acted. Easy interior. Has been effective in the original French, and in English.

Dramatist, 1915.

Houghton, Stanley. *The Dear Departed*. 3 m. 3 f. Excellent comedy. Grandfather's heirs squabble for his property—too soon.

Samuel French.

—*Fancy Free*. 2 m. 2 f. A satire on the triangle. Philandering husband and flirting wife brought together.

Izumo, Takeda. *Bushido*, also called *Matsuo*, and *The Pine Tree*. 18 rôles. Extras. Tragic incident of Japanese loyalty. Requires skill in producing its effects. Chance for beautiful set, costumes, stage pictures. Fairly large cast.

Duffield and Co.

Jones, Henry Arthur. *Her Tongue*. 2 m. 2 f. Extravagant, but laughable. Man returns to secure wife. The one recommended talks too much. Both leading rôles good.

George H. Doran Co.

Kreymborg, Alfred. *Mannikin and Minnikin*. An interesting dialogue. Two figures on a mantle. Novel contrast.

Others, N. Y.

Langner, Laurence. *Another Way Out*. 2 m. 3 f. Artist's studio. All rôles good. A farcical treatment of a Bohemian ménage. For sophisticated audiences.

Frank Shay.

Mackaye, Percy. *Chuck*. 3 m. 1 f. Good situation of rebellion against Puritan restraint. Exterior. Requires good acting.

Duffield and Co.

Matterlinck, Maurice. *The Intruder*. 3 m. 5 f. Interior. Tragic. Requires perfect atmosphere. Rather difficult. Grandfather part demanding. Has been done effectively.

Boni and Liveright.

—*The Miracle of S. Anthony*. 8 m. 3 f. Satire with a good moral. Daring. The saint offers to bring back a dead woman. Effect upon the family.

—*Interior* (also called *Home*). 4 m. 5 f. Tragic. Set rather difficult. Atmosphere must be correct. Has been done effectively.

Manners, J. Hartley. *Happiness*. 2 m. 2 f. Modern interior. Rather interesting. Better than the long version.

Dodd, Mead and Co.

Masefield, John. *The Locked Chest*. 3 m. 1 f. Extras. Costume, Iceland. Novel setting. Some tense moments.

The Macmillan Co.

Massey, Edward. *Plots and Playwrights*. 11 m. 6 f. Doubles possible. 4 scenes, really 2 acts. Satire on the regular drama and better drama. Excellent little theater material. Frequently produced. Playwright seeks dramatic material.

Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Mencken, H. L. *The Artist*. 7 m. 3 f. or more. One character on stage, large number in the audience. The speeches are the thoughts of people during a pianist's recital.

Alfred A. Knopf.



Middleton, George. *Embers*. 2 m. 1 f. Modern American interior. Acting fairly difficult. Can be made quite effective.  
Henry Holt and Company.

—*The Cheat of Pity*. 2 m. 1 f. Modern interior. Excellent treatment of alternation of pity and love between a woman and a man. Not too difficult if played with convincing quietness. Dramatic climax.

Millay, Edna, St. V. *Aria da Capo*. 4 m. 1 f. A Pierrot-Columbine play, fancifully but interestingly showing how little the usual people have been affected by the great events of recent years. Black and white interior.

*Chapbook*, 1920.

Moeller, Philip. *Helena's Husband*. 3 m. 2 f. Helen of Troy and Paris treated farcically; references to recent events. Settings and costumes may be burlesqued.

Alfred A. Knopf.

—*Pokey*. 6 m. 3 f. 2 scenes, exterior set. Pocahontas, John Smith, as they might have been. Easy to act. Good for amateurs.

Morrison and Pryce. *The Dumb Cake*. 1 m. 2 f. Humorous, pathetic. Interior set. Shows yearnings of a poor girl.  
Samuel French.

Nathan, George Jean. *The Letters*. 3 m. 1 f. Burlesque of the hackneyed situation in regular plays when the husband finds the other man's epistles to his wife. Every speech is a single letter.  
Alfred A. Knopf.

O'Neill, Eugene. *Emperor Jones*. 8 scenes. 8 m. 3 f. Pullman porter sovereign in an island. Seeks to flee. Reverts to his own people. Original, strong. Leading rôle requires excellent acting.  
*Theater Arts*, 1921.

—*He*. 5 m. 1 f. Extras. Cabin interior. Stark drama of a sea captain whose wife yearns to be taken back, while

he pushes on after whales. These two parts require good acting. Boni and Liveright.

Oppenheim, James. *Night*. 4 m. 1 f. Symbolic, poetic. Remarkably effective if production is correct.

Egmont Arens.

Palmer, John. *Over the Hills*. 2 m. 2 f. One set. Two scenes. Good situation of the sedentary man who yearns for the great out-doors. *Smart Set*, 1915.

Phillips, Stephen. *Nero's Mother*. 2 m. 3 f. Extras. A good situation with two good acting parts. Can be beautifully but simply staged. John Lane.

Phillipotts, Eben. *The Carrier Pigeon*. 2 m. 1 f. all old. Cottage bedroom. Old poacher squares with his enemy. Excellent. Duckworth.

Quinteros. *A Sunny Morning*. Humorous Spanish scene. Colorful. Two good parts. Permits original setting. *Poet-Lore*, Vol. 27.

Rice, Cale Young. *The Immortal Lore*. 4 rôles. Tragedy, ancient India, poetry. Excellent for contrast.

Doubleday, Page and Co.

Rogers, Robert E. *Behind a Watteau Picture*. 14 m. 2 f. Beautiful, poetic, novel. Always effective when well done. Baker and Co.

Rostand, Edmond. *The Romantics*, also called *Fantastics*. Act 1 makes a charming costume play. Poetic. 5 of the parts are excellent. Garden set. Baker and Co.

Schnitzler, Arthur. *Anatol*. 5 scenes. Small casts. All good. Clever, satiric situations of irregular amours. Dialogue alone almost carries them. Any one may be given, or all to fill an evening. For sophisticated audiences.

Mitchell Kennerley.

—*Literature*. 2 m. 1 f. How two lovers used their letters

as book material. Clever, satiric. Easy to produce. For sophisticated audiences. Stewart and Kidd.

Shaw, Bernard. *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. 2 m. 2 f. Shakespeare, Elizabeth. Beautiful stage pictures. Always effective. Brentano.

—*Press Cuttings*. 3 m. 3 f. Easy interior. All rôles good. A ludicrous satire on interesting topics.

—*How He Lied to Her Husband*. 2 m. 1 f. Interior. A clever turn to a trite situation. Always successful.

—*The Man of Destiny*. 3 m. 1 f. Set simple or elaborate. Incident, early life of Napoleon.

Stevens, Thomas Wood. *Holbein at Blackfriars*. 6 m. 2 f. The artist's studio. Delightful comedy of a meeting between Henry VIII and the painter. Characters excellent. Costumes produce beautiful stage pictures.

Stage Guild, Chicago.

Strindberg, August. *Simoon*. 2 m. 1 f. Tragedy of the desert. Interior. Highly wrought. Requires good acting.

Charles Scribner's Sons.

—*The Stronger*. An original dialogue in which one woman does all the talking; the other must act so well that she appears to be the stronger.

Sudermann, H. *Fritzchen*. 5 m. 2 f. One of the best one-act tragedies ever written. Interior set. A poignant play of Prussian militarism.

Charles Scribner's Sons.

—*The Far-Away Princess*. 2 m. 7 f. Charming treatment of how a princess responds to a chivalrous admiration. Excellent for young people.

Sutro, Alfred. *The Man in the Stalls*. Also called *The Man Out Front*. 2 m. 1 f. Interior. An original twist to the usual triangle. Telling conclusion. Brentano.

Symons, Arthur. *Cleopatra in Judaea*. 7 m. 3 f. Colorful oriental pictures. Two good acting rôles. Excellent contrast with modern plays. John Lane.

Synge, John M. *The Tinker's Wedding*. 2 m. 2 f. 2 scenes. Exterior. Tricks of a traveling group of ne'er-do-wells. One of the best known and most frequently acted Irish comedies. Luce and Co.

—*The Shadow of the Glen*. 3 m. 1 f. Next in popularity, perhaps, to the preceding. A poetic tramp. Interior. Fairly easy for amateurs. Dialect requires care.

—*Riders to the Sea*. 1 m. 3 f. Extras. One of the best tragedies. Requires excellent acting to produce proper effect. Old woman's part difficult. Rude interior.

Tagore, Rabindranath. *Chitra*. 4 rôles. Novel for outdoors. Villagers. Everything depends upon method of production. Macmillan and Co.

Tarkington, Booth. *Beauty and the Jacobin*. 3 m. 4 f. Humorous, tense scene from French Revolution. Almost a one man play. Harper Bros.

Tchekoff, Anton. *A Marriage Proposal*. 2 m. 1 f. Easy to produce. Simple Russian interior. Frequently performed. All parts good. Samuel French.

Torrence, Ridgley. *The Rider of Dreams*. 2 m. 1 f. 1 child, all negroes. Interior. The father and husband lets his imagination run away with him. This rôle and the wife are good acting parts. Macmillan and Co.

Walker, Stuart. *Never-the-Less*. 1 m. 1 boy, 1 girl. Two delightful children. Whimsical. Can be simply set. A delightful interlude. Stewart and Kidd.

Wilde, Percival. *Pawns*. 6 m. An excellent preachment against war's horrors. Eastern Europe. The effect of mobilization upon simple peasant neighbors. Exterior.

Little, Brown and Co.



Yeats, W. B. *The Land of Heart's Desire*. 3 m. 3 f. Plain interior. Tragic. Irish folk-lore. Requires careful production to evoke proper atmosphere.

The Macmillan Co.

—*Cathleen Ni Houlihan*. 3 m. 3 f. Poetic treatment of war feeling. Requires just the proper treatment for its effect. Good atmosphere.



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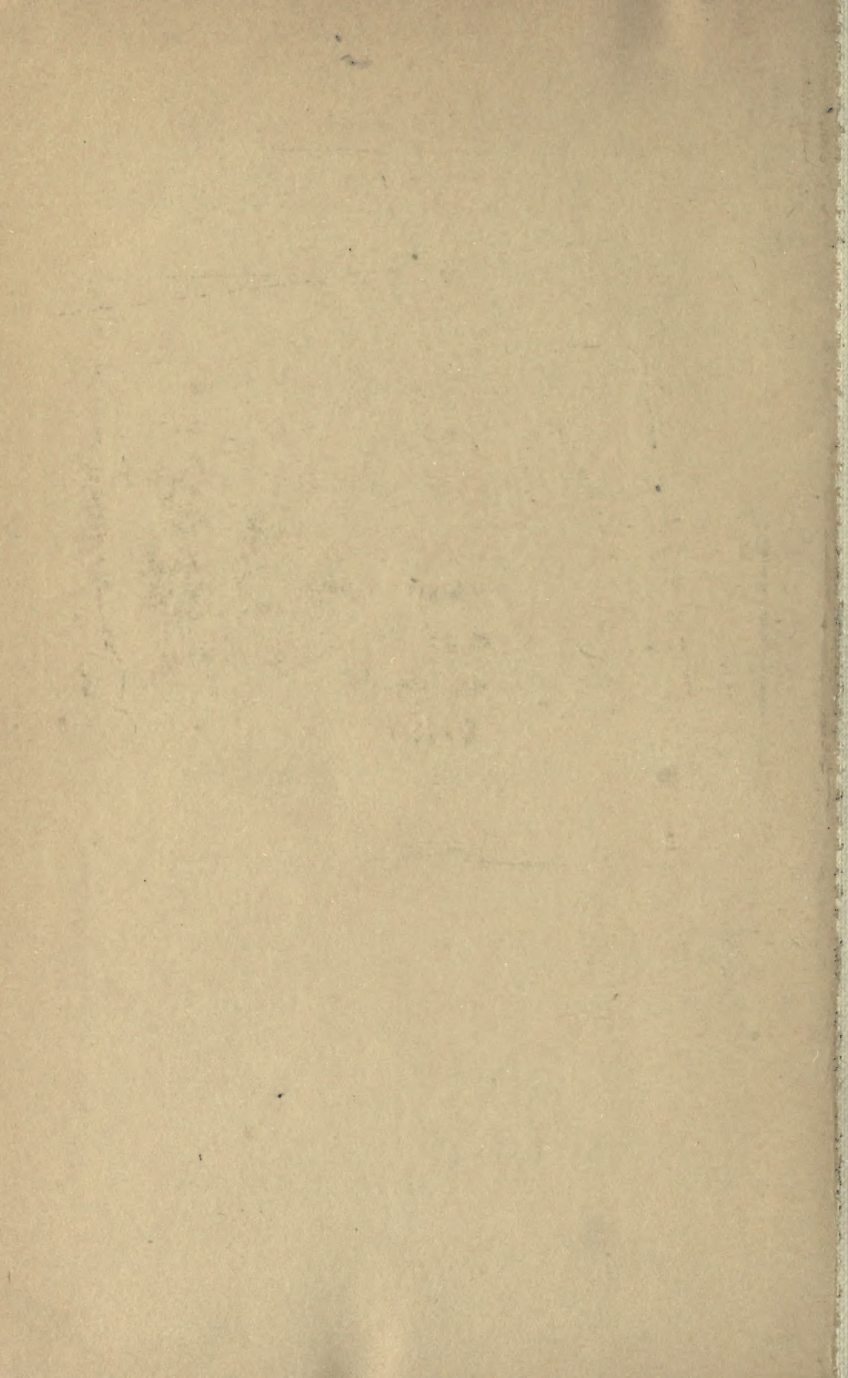
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